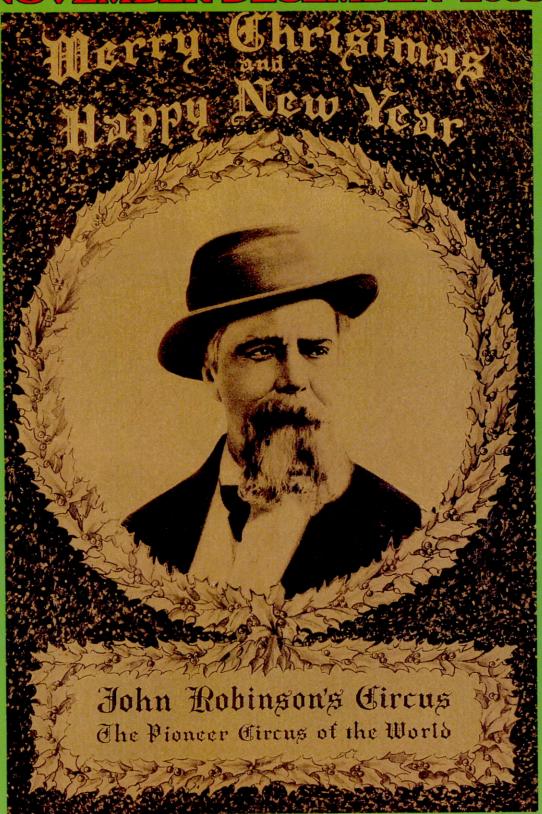
BANDWAGON

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2008



BY INVOKING THE IMAGINATION, PROVOKING THE SENSES AND EVOKING EMOTION, CIRQUE DU SOLEIL® KEEPS PURSUING ITS DREAMS OF SPREADING JOY AND WONDER EVERYWHERE AROUND THE WORLD.



HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ALL, AND MAY YOUR NEW YEAR BE FILLED WITH MAGIC.







A Documentary History of the Barnum and London Circus in 1881

By Fred D. Pfening III

The orthodox explanation of the circumstances that brought P. T. Barnum, James A. Bailey, and James L. Hutchinson into partnership goes something like this. A female baby elephant, named Columbia, was born on 10 March 1880 at the Philadelphia winter quarters of James E. Cooper and James A. Bailey's Great London Circus.

Thanks to masterful promotion, the infant pachyderm proved to be a tremendous money getter. In head to head competition, Cooper & Bailey outdrew Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth in New England in the spring. Eight cities saw both circuses, including Brooklyn and Boston. In every case Barnum was in first. Conventional wisdom dictated that the first show in a locale would outdraw the second, but not this time, even in Barnum's home town of Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The Great London's star was national news. A Pennsylvania newspaper noted in early June: "The baby elephant is proving the strongest attraction ever presented by a show in this country. The circus to which it belongs is drawing enormous audiences through New England, and in some places three performances a day are given." ¹

Then the London really struck gold. When asked if the Cooper & Bailey baby was genuine, Barnum, responded, "Indeed it is. I wish it wasn't—I should be tens of thousands of dollars better off. A full grown elephant brings \$6000, but I offered the London Circus Company \$100,000 [\$2,092,250]² for the mother elephant and

A black and white steel engraving of an oversized Barnum and London 1881 letterhead. Author's Collection.

P.T.BARNUM'S GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH, THE GREAT LONDON CIRCUS.

TRAVELLING THIS SEASON ONLY UNITED ACTUAL EXPENSES DAILY \$ 4500 °°



SANGER'S ROYAL BRITISH MENAGERIE & GRAND INTERNATIONAL ALLIED SHOWS

ME Young ** P.T.BARNUM, J.A.BAILEY & J.L.HUTCHINSON, SOLE OWNERS. ** Secretary

CENTRALEATION OF ALL THAT IS GREAT IN THE AMUSEMENT RELAK.—TRINITY OF THE THREE GRAND ANIMAL COLLECTIONS OF EARTH—QUARTETTE OF ARENIC CONSTITIONS IN THREE RINGS—MUSEUM OF CILESTIAL GIANTS, NOTED MIDDET PEOPLE, AND ANIMATE, IND AUTOMATIC SPECTACLES—THE PAST SCLIPSED AND UNPARALLELED IN THE PRESENT—\$2,000,000 INVESTED, AND A DALLY EXPENDITURE SECOND INVESTED, AND A DALLY EXPENDITURE SECOND INVESTED, AND A DALLY EXPENDITURE AND ANIMATE. AND ANIMATE OF THE FEATURES RECOURSE—COTEMPORATIES BIRINK AWAY AS IT APPROACHES—THE ABSOLUTE MORAL MIRADLE OF THE MOMENT—A SATISTY FOR THE PUBLIC APPETITE, AND THE PARAGON OF THE CENTURY—EACH INDIVIDUAL PERFORMER A CHAMPION, WHO DEMONSTRATES THE HORSE STAND OF PERFORM OR STAND OF THE SECOND ANIMATION, OF THE GRAND, THERE IS NOTHING LEFT TO SEE.

baby, and it would have been worth twice that to me."

He continued: "It is a good show. It pushed me harder last spring than any other show I ever encountered. It went right along behind us, giving us the cream of the business all through New England, and I'll be blast if it didn't take as much money as we did. . . . It is wonderful to see how the women flock to see that baby elephant." It was as if Jesus had endorsed Muhammad.

Little Columbia was now "the wonderful baby elephant which P. T. Barnum offered \$100,000 for." The great circus man said it was the biggest strategic mistake of his career. If the world's greatest showman spoke so highly of the London Circus and its baby elephant, it had to be something special, something worth seeing. And Bailey made sure the public knew it. He commissioned posters reproducing the telegram Barnum sent him which said: "Will give \$100,000 for your baby elephant. Must have it." Bailey answered, "Will not sell at any price."

Barnum, never accused of stupidity, realized that if he couldn't beat his opponent, the next best thing was to join him, so he essentially sued for peace. He had met his match, or as he put it: "I found that I had at last met foemen 'worthy of my steel."" The rest, as they say, is history. For five remarkable years, the Barnum and London Circus set the world ablaze, creating a new standard for the business, against which all other shows were measured.

While details varied in the telling, this was essentially the Genesis story of Barnum and Bailey. Barnum himself was most responsible for it, repeatedly telling or writing this version of events or something close to it. In his 1932 history of the American circus, Earl Chapin May said it most succinctly: "A baby elephant brought James A. Bailey into partnership with Barnum."

In 1957, in one of his most notable insights, Richard E. Conover wrote: "The stock tale of how the baby elephant, born on the Cooper & Bailey show in 1880, was responsible for bringing Barnum and Bailey together may just as well have been written after the merger as to have been the cause of it." In fact, it was.

Bowser Diary: 28 May 1880: "Comb. London-Barnum."⁵

Henry Eugene Bowser (1838-1911) was P. T. Barnum's personal secretary, a trusted member of the old lion's inner circle. He kept a diary from 1880 until after Barnum's death in 1891. While the volumes mainly document Barnum's myriad non-circus commercial activities, particularly his vast real estate holdings, they are nevertheless a treasure trove for the field show historian. Bowser recorded his employer's comings and goings, his health, who visited him, commented on the weather and current events—and made scores of observations on his boss's involvement in the show business.

Many of Bowser's remarks were mundane such as one from 28 March 1881: "Barnum & London Show opens in New York." Others, however, provide us with big surprises.

The items entered in code are even more tantalizing.⁶ This was the really hot stuff for Barnum's and Bowser's eyes only. Most of these concerned the circus, at least for the transition years of 1880 and 1881 when Barnum ended one partnership and began another. On 12 August

1880 the following coded notice appeared, which was typical of developments Barnum wanted to keep quiet: "Purchased the other half of show for \$45,000 [\$941,513]." He was then involved in the delicate business of disengaging from George Bailey, Lewis June, and John Nathans, known at the time and now as the Flatfoots and his partners for the last five years, and this entry documented the date and amount paid by Barnum to acquire their half interest in the enterprise.

Perhaps the biggest bombshell in all the Bowser diaries appeared on 28 May 1880 where an important moment in American field show history was documented. "Comb. London-Barnum" refers to an agreement executed two days earlier by Barnum, Bailey and Hutchinson in which they committed themselves to a partnership in 1881 and beyond. The events leading up to the 26 May contract moved with remarkable speed. Barnum was approached around mid-May by James Hutchinson. The two probably met in New York on 21 May, and by the 26th the deal was done. It was quite similar to the final agreement dated 26 August (but apparently executed earlier) with the exception of the removal of a penalty clause giving Barnum a bonus if revenue didn't exceed his best year with the Flatfoots.

Another agreement, signed on 22 July, contained much that appeared the final contract, but with important differences, the main one being that Hutchinson was not included in the accord. Barnum had to pay Bailey \$40,000 [\$836,900] for half interest in the Great London Circus, with the intent of sending it to Europe for at least three years. The contract appears to concern only the London show, which was at the time scheduled to go to Europe. While evidence is lacking, one can speculate that the 26 May agreement concerned only the circus that was to tour North America. To go farther out on the limb, it can be surmised that Hutchinson's involvement was limited to the American unit. By the time the merger was finalized about 26 August, the zeal for an European unit had diminished, and Hutchinson was in for a quarter share. same as Bailey. Bailey must have continued to have an interest in going overseas as he wrote Barnum in early October for a copy of the 22 July agreement to which Barnum responded by kindly copying all four pages of that contract in his own hand.7

Historians have known from a number of sources that the combination of the Cooper and Bailey, and Barnum circuses took place in August 1880. The original 26 May 1880 agreement was unknown until Stuart Hicks of Fremantle, Australia decided to see what was in a box in his in-laws' attic in 1999. There he found the papers of his wife's great grandfather, James L. Hutchinson. Fascinated, he began to sort through the material and discovered over 200 letters, notes, and telegrams from P. T. Barnum, most from the period 1880 to 1887 when Barnum and Hutchinson were partners. The historic 26 May agreement and many letters relating to the consolidation were among the records. They proved that the merger took place three months earlier than previously known, putting a significantly different spin on the events that transpired that summer, of which more later.8

Before that historic late-August consolidation the little

elephant was constantly in the news. The marketing strategy for Columbia evolved over the months. Within three days of her birth the London's publicity department informed the press that, "Its owner says he wouldn't take a hundred thousand dollars for it." This was the first of many dollars signs affixed to her.

Cooper & Bailey took the entire back cover of the 10 April 1880 New York Clipper in which they called the elephant, "The Bonanza Baby, Worth \$100,000" with no mention of anyone offering that amount. This was an era in which America's industrial elite built fortunes undreamed of only two decades earlier, and the general public was fascinated by lots of digits behind a dollar sign. Circuses commonly published their income and expenses in newspa-

pers, especially if it was a large number. Occasionally the figures are verifiable, and occasionally they are, amazingly enough, correct.

By at least mid-May, the advertising claimed the show had rejected a \$186,000 offer for mother and daughter from "a firm of Showmen." These anonymous impresarios were willing to pay \$1000 a day for a six month season. Not only that, but now the baby elephant was more valuable than "any Two Entire Menageries." In a herald distributed for six Massachusetts stands from 5 to 10 July, the London asserted the \$1000 a day would translate to \$313,000 a year, inferring, but not quite asserting, that was the offer. Another herald, produced for the same dates, made no mention of any offers for Columbia while devoting one entire side of the bill to her.

Shortly before their 26 May agreement with Barnum, Cooper and Bailey circulated a rat bill that claimed that Barnum's people distributed bogus handbills for a nonexistent balloon ascension along the London's route with the intention of skimming off some of its customers. It also asserted Barnum denounced the London show from the ring of his circus. This flyer was a strange, mean spirited denunciation of the great man that insinuated he was jealous about the baby elephant, and that the show business had passed him by. Two aspects of this advertisement are significant. First, these personal attacks on Barnum stopped as soon as Bailey and Hutchinson reached a tentative pact with him; and second, the herald, while accusing Barnum of everything short of Lincoln's assassination, does not mention him making a \$100,000 offer.

Along the same lines, an illustrated postal cover, ostensibly sent to Bailey in Boston where the London appeared from 7 to 12 June, lampooned Barnum by showing a drawing of him with a trunk for a nose and an elephant blanket over him with "Baby Mine" written on it. He was mounted on a wheeled plank in a glass case, the side of



Lithograph showing the baby elephant Columbia and her mother, Hebe, in the Cooper and Bailey winter quarters. Note the anthropomorphized breasts on the mother elephant. Author's Collection.

which read: "Proclamation. My own and the only Baby Elephant ever born on Wheels." Bailey, in his night clothes, fed the baby elephant while she sat on his lap. In the text to Bailey's left Columbia asked: "Oh, papa, papa. What is it? I'm afraid. Take it away." Bailey replies: "Don't be frightened dear, it can't hurt you. It is nothing but Barnum's baby." It inferred that Barnum had nothing to match Bailey's baby elephant, and any attempt on the old humbug's part to emulate her would be a fraud. It satirized Barnum without any reference to his attempt to buy the elephant. It's hard to imagine the artist would have neglected that proposal had he known of it. 10

The author has found no hint of Barnum's \$100,000 offer prior to an interview he gave to the *Indianapolis Journal* on 11 July where the old man himself blurted it out. By this time the deal with Bailey and Hutchinson was well on its way to completion. In fact, evidence suggests that the entire baby elephant drama was orchestrated by Barnum in one of his most brilliant brainstorms. ¹¹

Curiously, the London was slow to use this admission in its advertising. Two Cooper and Bailey newspaper ads for upstate New York dates in late July and early August still referred only to the vague \$186,000 bid.

The first notice of Barnum's offer emanating from the Cooper and Bailey camp wasn't until the end of July when a short notice of it appeared in a Cleveland newspaper. ¹² Not coincidentally, the London was in the midst of an opposition battle with Forepaugh, and a plug from the world's greatest circus man would be of benefit.

While more research may disclose earlier examples, the next use of the \$100,000 offer was in the London's advertising for its triumphful return to Philadelphia for a 13-

18 September stand. No record of Barnum's proposition has been found in any reviews of the London Circus, and the Cleveland press release is the only reader thus far discovered. A small herald as well as newspaper ads used for the Philadelphia date proclaimed the baby was: "The Prodigy for which Barnum offered \$100,000 has cleared \$300,000 for its lucky owners." The herald also stated: "Zoological Gardens and acute Managers made fabulous offers for it, Mr. Barnum among the number to first bid \$100,000 for it as he since publicly confesses." Another herald publicizing the Philadelphia engagement didn't refer to Barnum's offer, but informed the public that this was their last chance to see the baby because she and her mother were going to Europe the next year. 13 This was during the period when Barnum, Bailey and Hutchinson were leaning toward taking the London to Europe. Barnum's attempt to buy the elephant was used in most, but by no means all, Cooper and Bailey publicity.

Virtually every secondary source credits the baby elephant for bringing Barnum, Bailey and Hutchinson together. Yet there is almost no evidence of the supposedly massive publicity campaign Cooper and Bailey conducted around Barnum's effort to buy the baby. They never referred to it in their publicity until the end of July, and although it was alluded to more frequently during the final three months of the season, it wasn't used in all publicity materials and was rarely the centerpiece of newspaper ads. The total absence of evidence that the infamous telegram existed is even more telling. It was not part of any advertising nor mentioned in any readers or reviews the author has examined. So, unless new documentation surfaces, the popular account of the baby elephant causing the great alliance must be dismissed for lack of evidence.

Barnum's collusion with Bailey and Hutchinson manifested itself in another way. On 17 July Barnum wrote a letter, ostensibly answering an inquiry by a friend asking his opinion of the "merits of the London Show," that mysteriously found its way into Cooper & Bailey's newspaper ads in what appeared to be the nineteenth century equivalent of industrial espionage. He started the letter by saying he had just seen the London show at Greenfield, Massachusetts on 15 July. Noting that the show outdrew his own circus in New England that spring, and that the "press and public speak highly" of it, "I ran to Greenfield to see it for myself."

And he was impressed: The "London Circus—take it all in all—is a clean moral, well conducted, stunning exhibition, by far the largest and best that ever traveled except my own." He ended the letter by saying that in 1881 his show and the London would again be in competition, but he was ready: "I'll make the London hair stand on end." 14

Cooper and Bailey's turn came shortly after. In a public letter about the old showman they noted, "Mr. Barnum has thrown down the gauntlet for next year, and the managers of the London Show gladly take it up. We shall go over the same ground, visiting all of the same country at about the same time that Mr. Barnum does, in friendly but earnest competition. Then shall be a 'war of the Titans' that shall stir up the whole land." The motive for all this chest pounding was to establish in the public's

mind that the London Circus was "by far the largest and best" on the road except Barnum's own show. This was an invaluable asset for Cooper and Bailey, especially during opposition battles such as the one against the Great Forepaugh Show in Cleveland in early August.

Although Barnum toured until 6 November and Cooper and Bailey until 30 October, they stayed out of one another's way after late May. In fact, the challenge from Cooper & Bailey was so strong, one account later claimed, that the Barnum show abandoned its eastern route and highballed it West, going as far as Wyoming Territory, Colorado, and Texas. The Great London stayed in the lucrative East, going no farther west than Cleveland. Since they were playing different regions—one East, one West—they couldn't hurt the other's business, no matter how much sniping went on.

News that something big was afoot began to leak out. About the time the merger was completed, the 21 August 1880 New York Clipper ran this brief notice: "A Great Combination.—It is possible that P. T. Barnum's 'Greatest Show on Earth,' and Bailey's London Show will unite, and give a series of exhibition in this city towards the close of the present season. Mr. Bailey has purchased of Mr. Cooper all of his interest in the London Show." While the Clipper didn't get it right, this appears to be the first public disclosure that a deal of some sort was in the making.

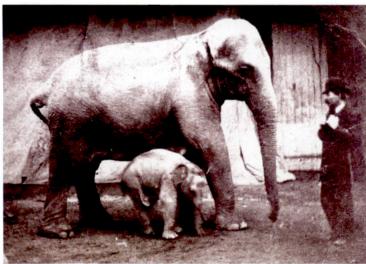
The final agreement was signed about 26 August.

This agreement made at Bridgeport, Connecticut, August 26th A. D. 1880 between Phineas T. Barnum of said Bridgeport, Party of the first party, and James a Bailey of the city and state of New York, party of the second part, and James L. Hutchinson of said New York City, party of the third part.

Witnesseth.

Art. 1. That the parties hereto agree to exhibit a traveling show, or shows, under such titles as they may all agree upon, and the capital used and employed in carrying on such business shall be provided, as follows, to wit. By said Barnum one half of the same, said Bailey one fourth of the same, and said Hutchinson one fourth of the same, and all benefits shall be divided between them, and all losses shall be sustained by them in the same proportions as the above, viz, Barnum one half, Bailey one quarter and Hutchinson one quarter.

- 2. Neither party hereto shall receive any wages, salary or compensation for services rendered, but each party shall be reimbursed for board and necessary traveling expenses while engaged in transacting business for the Company during the year.
- 3. Said Bailey & Hutchinson shall devote their entire time and services to the successful prosecution of said business and to the best of their abilities shall manage and conduct said show, or shows, honorably, successfully, and to the satisfaction of the moral and refined portion of the community.
- 4. The said Barnum shall use his influence and abilities in behalf of said show, or shows, and shall when able, devote his talents, knowledge and experience to writing for them, and shall identify himself therewith as one of the owners thereof. He will also when he feels able and willing



Mother and baby in 1880. Author's Collection.

only, appear before the patrons of the same and address them, but nothing herein contained shall conflict with his visiting any part of this world, nor with his devoting time and attention to any permanent Museum, with which he may connected.

- 5. The said Barnum grants to this Company the absolute and exclusive use of his name in all civilized countries for Circus, Menageries, and Animal exhibitions and all shows incidental thereto during the existence of this contract, except in the City of New York, where this Company cannot exhibit more than six weeks in any one year, without the consent of said Barnum and of the proprietors of any permanent Museum with which said Barnum may be connected in said City.
- 6. But nothing herein contained shall prevent said Barnum from using his name in connection with any museums in the Cities of Philadelphia, Pa., Brooklyn, N. Y. and Chicago, Ills.
- 7. Settlement as far as convenient shall be made weekly, and in any event monthly, and remittances on payments of profits shall be paid as follows, to wit: One half to said Barnum, and one quarter to said Bailey and one quarter to said Hutchinson, whenever Twenty Thousand Dollars, or more, shall be in the Treasurer's hands.
- 8. Each party hereto, as above stated, shall advance and pay, without delay, the money required for his share in order to equip and sustain such show, or shows.
- 9. Said Barnum shall be allowed to select one or two intelligent, honest and well behaved persons, who shall be hired by said Company at reasonable and proper salaries not exceeding Fifty Dollars per week, each, besides board and transportation. These persons shall perform all reasonable duties, not menial, required by said Company, and shall at all times have access to all books and accounts, and be informed of all the details of said business, but they must not interfere with the management of the same. They shall be recognized and treated as representatives of said Barnum and have the comforts and traveling accommodations suitable and proper to their position; but should they, or either of them, prove incompetent, or otherwise reasonably objectionable to the managers of said Company, said

Barnum or his agent shall supply his or their place at two weeks written notice.

- 10. Said Bailey and Hutchinson shall manage the details of said show, or shows, but said Barnum shall be consulted upon all important points, and the parties hereto shall mutually agree upon the same before they shall be carried out.
- 11. And it is mutually agreed that no purchases shall be made except for cash, and no debts or obligations shall be incurred by any party hereto that shall be binding upon the others unless specifically agreed upon and authorized by all in writing.
- 12. Neither party hereto shall sell, or dispose of his interest in this enterprise, or Company, without the written consent of all the parties hereto.
- 13. This agreement shall continue until the first Monday of November (1899) Eighteen Hundred and Ninety-Nine.
- 14. In case of the death of said Barnum before this agreement shall expire by lapse of time, said Company shall not thereby be dissolved, nor shall his property and interest in the same be withdrawn, but all the terms of this agreement shall continue for the benefit of the estate of said Barnum with no charge or sett off against said estate on account of the loss to the Company and business of his personal influence and services.

It is provided however, that the Executors or administrators of said Barnum's estate may sell or dispose of the property and interest of said Estate in said Company and business, and withdraw from the same, upon their giving written notice of their purpose to the Parties hereto, at least three months before some first Monday of January after his decease; and further that they shall give to the other parties hereto the first privilege of purchasing the property and interest of said Estate in said Company, but they must give as much therefor as any other person, or person will give for the same.

15. In case of the death of either said Bailey or Hutchinson, after the traveling season has commenced, his property and interest in said Company shall not be withdrawn nor the right of his Estate to one quarter of the profits of said business during that season be lost, but the same shall continue and be for the benefit of his Estate notwithstanding the loss to the business of his personal services for that season, where it shall be otherwise agreed by the survivor and the Executors or Administrators of the Estate of the deceased. It is agree that the season, so-called above, ends on the first Monday of January in each year.

16. In case of the death of either party hereto, the executor or administrators of his Estate shall appoint if they so desire, and it is agreed hereby that they shall be empowered to appoint a proper and competent person to be their special agent and representative in the management of said Company and business for said Estate, and each agent and representative shall be consulted, and act and have all the rights and powers that the deceased, if living, would have, under this agreement. This article 16. does not cancel nonconflict with article 9. in this agreement.

17. If any misunderstanding shall at any time arise between any of the parties hereto, or their representative as to the true construction of this agreement, or any part

thereof, their said question shall be submitted to three disinterested and judicious persons, one chosen by each party and side of the controversy, and the third by the two arbitrators so chosen, said arbitration shall hear and decide all such questions without delay, and their decision or the decision of a majority of them shall be final.

18. This contract shall be binding upon all the parties hereto, and each of them, his executors, administrators, heirs and assignees. Signed: P. T. Barnum, J. A. Bailey, J. L. Hutchinson

It should be no surprise that Barnum himself broke the news of the consolidation in an interview in the 5 September New York Sun. He repeated the story of his visit to the London in Greenfield, Massachusetts on 15 July. While watching the performance "his astonishment was increased, because he found that it really approached his own in magnitude and excellent. While he sat unrecognized on one of the cushioned planks a scheme was born in his head, which soon took shape and was afterward written out in the form of a contract. This contract was signed a day or two ago [actually about 26 August]. Mr. Barnum says he conceived the design of being the owner or controller of the two greatest shows on earth." The story was mostly bunk, but great public relations. Joseph McCaddon, Bailey's brother-in-law, underlined the above passages on a copy of the interview, writing at the top, "The old man is a good talker." In reality Barnum met with Bailey in Greenfield, and worked out the contract they signed on 22 July.

He told the *Sun* reporter he had no plans to combine the shows since his "was already all that a show could be, and the London Circus was nearly as good. The two shows will never be united. One such show is enough for one continent."

Referring to Cooper and Bailey, he stated, "Its proprietors are liberal, full of vim, and, having had the godsend of a baby elephant, the only one ever born in captivity, they are sweeping the country like a whirlwind and taking in about as much money as my own show does. This continent can't support two such immensely expensive shows. We can only visit large towns, and each show is obliged to visit many of the same towns in one season. We have been compelled, therefore, to form a grand alliance, offensive and defensive. We do not exactly 'pool our issues,' but we have agreed not to clash, and, although each maintains a separate organization, we shall do much in common."

One show would go to Europe in the spring for a five year tour, he continued. Upon its return the other show would go over. In November the combined shows might appear in New York City. A long description of the new Bridgeport winter quarters followed.

"My men are all trustworthy," he went on. "If one of them is found drinking he knows that he will be discharged just as soon as I can find a man to take his place. Seven-eighths of them are pledged teetotalers." 17

Adam Forepaugh was so incensed by this interview that he took ads in the *New York Clipper* of 2 October 1880 and the *New York Dramatic News* of the same date, in which he hammered the Bridgeport showman.

Forepaugh's diatribe came in the form of an open letter

to Barnum, dated 21 September from Coldwater, Michigan. He began: "Some kind friend has done me the favor to mail me a copy of the *New York Sun* of September 5, containing a romance headed 'Barnum's New Departure.' After perusing the same I must exclaim with Shakespeare in The Tempest: 'Your tale would cure deafness.' In the falseness of its statements it out-Gulliver's Gulliver, and is well worthy of the author (?) of Lion Jack and the Autobiography of P. T. B. Perhaps for the reason that you have so long been permitted to weave fairy tales for the press you have become emboldened to relate this gutta perhca yarn which you poured into the ear of the credulous reporter."

It is doubtful, to say the least, that Forepaugh could quote Shakespeare or any other English literary figure off the top of his head as he ostensibly did in this letter, suggesting that Charles H. Day, his bill writer and the king of the rhetorical flourish, was the author. This letter was Forepaugh's first salvo in a multi-year war; he would fire many more the next year.

He disputed many of Barnum's declarations in the interview. Forepaugh's criticisms were intended to show that Barnum was not the circus man the public believed he was, and that he was out of touch with the business. Forepaugh pointed out factual errors in the old man's remarks about the circus business, for example, Barnum's assertion that forty shows were on tour.

Then he got personal: "Your new Winter quarters are admirably situated—in an old cemetery. Permit me to suggest several monuments: To the memory of Chauncey Jerome of the Jerome Clock Company, who died in poverty and obscurity. To the memory of that monstrosity, Barnum's Museum, which thrived in its day and generation, because it was the single place of amusement in New York that women of the town could visit unaccompanied by a male escort. The defunct Hippodrome, which depleted the pockets of your partners, Coup, Bunnell, Hurd and Castello. And a lofty marble to the lost fortunes of Howes and Castello, P. A. Older and John O'Brien, who used your name and were thereby brought to ruin." Forepaugh's knowledge of circus history was impressive.

He took umbrage at Barnum's inference that his employees were morally superior to those on other shows: "Your employees are no better nor worse than those employed by any other manager, except as association with an institution bearing your name may prove contaminating. How much you are superior to other managers in morality or temperance, I leave others to decide, but I do assert that yours and company's is the only one in the country that carries a jug in the ticket wagon."

He then made the cutting claim that Barnum was not the owner or even part owner of the Greatest Show on Earth. Barnum's indispensable contribution to the composition and management of the circus bearing his name, a fiction nurtured like a fragile orchid by the show's press department and Barnum himself, was one of the enterprise's most important assets. ¹⁸ This had been the major knock on Barnum since 1871.

The plan to have a unit on each side of the Atlantic appears genuine. The 9 October *Clipper* noted that the



Photograph of envelope addressed to James A. Bailey satirizing Barnum's inability to copy Cooper and Bailey's star attraction. Dating from June 1880 when the London Circus was appearing in Boston, the cover, while parodying Barnum, makes no mention of his reputed \$100,000 offer for the baby elephant. Author's Collection.

contracts to transport the London show to England were signed on 25 September. Frank Hyatt, it was reported, was to leave on 6 October to make advance arrangements on the other side. The paper also stated the show would be in Liverpool in late April 1881, and that billposting would start in March. To add credibility to the account the paper cited Charles Brothwell, one of Barnum's personal assistants, as the source for this information. Brothwell was then engaged in supervising the construction of the new winter quarters in Bridgeport, the same used by Barnum and Bailey and Ringling-Barnum until 1927.

Bailey announced that his partnership with James E. Cooper would be dissolved on 30 October in a classified notice in the next week's Clipper. He also inserted another ad in which he paid tribute to Cooper. His retirement, Bailey related, "fills me with the most profound regret." Cooper is "a thorough businessman, conscientious and frank to a fault, always gentle and kind in disposition, honest and discreet in every transaction, intelligent of perception and quick of judgment. I personally esteem James E. Cooper as deeply and sincerely as any man I ever saw-and who can possibly know him more intimately than I do." Richard Conover, who never made editorial comments about the thousands of citations he recorded on his research note cards, twice wrote on cards how well written Bailey's accolade was. He might have added poignant and sensitive. 19

On 5 November Cooper and Bailey auctioned its surplus equipment in Philadelphia. Adam Forepaugh, John O'Brien, William Batcheller and John B. Doris were among the bidders. Two pair of performing cattle, about seventy horses, lots of hardware, harness, lights, tents, wardrobe, elephant blankets a couple of cages, and a "railroad bridge," presumably a cross over plate, were some of the items on the block. Most equipment went cheap. The bidding on some of the horses was so weak that they were pulled from the sale.²⁰

By mid-November the plan to send one show to Europe was abandoned,

but "the management with good judgment have concluded to merge the two entertainments into one" to tour the United States in 1881. A report in the 16 November *Buffalo* (New York) *Daily Courier* stated both shows would retain their identities by presenting simultaneous performances under one big top. The article, almost certainly a press release, concluded that, "Truly, this is the biggest scheme ever undertaken by mortal man in the way of amusement ventures."

Another account stated the new partners realized they didn't the time to organize a European unit, so they made the bold, almost insane, decision to combine Cooper & Bailey's Great London Circus with P. T. Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth, but only for the 1881 season, after which the circuses would be divided and the original plan of sending one to Europe would be executed. Barnum expressed anxiety over the size of the combined shows, worried that the receipts would not equal the huge expense such a gigantic endeavor would generate, \$3500 [\$73,229] or even \$4500 [\$94,151] a day, far higher than any other field show in American history.

Bailey later said that Barnum's illness, which will be explained shortly, was the most prominent reason the European tour was scraped. "The matter of running the whole show in the U. S.," he continued "was discussed for weeks. But as most of our contracts with artists had already been made it was determined to give the U. S. a show designed for two continents. It will be for this season only." ²¹

The Barnum show sold fifty horses, a number of trick stallions, and ten Shetland ponies on 20 November. A bigger sale occurred on 16 December when the show unloaded its superfluous equipment at auction. The day before the Pullman, Shelby and Hamilton Circus bought three elephants, two camels, a den of performing

lions and ten other dens, probably cross cages, for a reported \$20,000. The next day, at the formal auction, the John Robinson Circus bought twenty-two flat cars for \$12,000. Built for the newly re-organized Barnum Circus over the winter of 1875-1876 they were the first steel flats ever used on a circus. Surprisingly, a number of stuffed animals were sold, including a hippo, a lion, and a giraffe that went for \$6.00. Five wax female figures brought in a buck, and W. C. Coup, once Barnum's partner, now his rival, purchased an automatic cornet player—an automaton—for \$8.00 [\$167]. It would sell for considerably more today. ²²

An analysis of properties sold by both companies indicated that more Barnum paraphernalia was sold than the London's, suggesting that the physical plant of the 1881 combine was for the most part from Cooper and Bailey.

Barnum's Next Year's Plans, The Buffalo (New York) Daily Courier, 26 December 1880, p. 3. Reprinted from the New York Sun.

The Bridgeport winter quarters is not the only place where the drill and preparation are going on for the coming season. At the company's office, 7 West Third street, this city, Mr. Hutchinson is attending to a vast volume of correspondence, and engaging novelties and curiosities. Mr. James Bailey, the general manager, is continually on flying trips to Cincinnati, Buffalo, Philadelphia, and elsewhere, looking after \$100,000 contracts for a season's poster printing and making other business arrangements; three or four men are in foreign countries securing new animals and other curiosities; in Thirty-fourth street twenty women are sewing on elephant robes, camel covers, blankets, and other fabrics that every well-regulated show requires. Gymnasts are practicing in private quarters here and in Bridgeport, those in the latter places going occasionally to the winter quarters to perform in the rings.

Early in March the cars of the combined shows, resplendent in canary-colored paint, will be turned out of the New Haven repair shops, and will bring the shows to this city for the first exhibition, which will be preceded by a night parade a mile long that will out Barnum Barnum. After a short season the shows will move eastward through all the large towns. A town of less than 15,000 inhabitants is too small for a paying business, for it takes 7000 admissions or \$3500 a day to pay the expenses of the combined shows. When the union of the London and Barnum's was first effected it was deigned to send one show to Europe and have the other travel in this country. But that plan will not be followed until the two shows have tried the experiment of keeping together. The managers of the two companies are merged in one. The circuses will be kept distinct, but everything is to be included in a single exhibition. Whether to have the animal tent in the centre, with the London circus at one end and the Barnum circus at the other, in different tents, or to have three rings for the circus performers under one tent, are details that have not been decided upon as yet. If, when Boston is reached, it is found that the combined shows cannot travel together to good advantage, the London will be detached and sent to Europe under the name of Barnum's American show, and the other show, bearing the name of the separate companies that compose it, will travel through the United States.

Mr. Barnum expects to travel with the combination, as usual, but will leave the details to Mr. Bailey, the general manager, and to Mr. Hutchinson, his partners. Mr. Barnum's partners were both with the London show. They are young men, under thirty-five, and almost grew up in the business. Mr. Bailey was a show bill poster, and Mr. Hutchinson started in life as a driver of a circus wagon at fifteen dollars a month.

Thus ended a momentous year in the circus business. Neither the Barnum or Cooper and Bailey route books made any mention of the amalgamation, even after the *New York Clipper* published the news in its 11 September edition. The merger must have been the main topic of conversation on the lot and train, and concerns about salary cuts or job loss dominated that conversation.

Both companies had great years. The Barnum Circus had receipts of \$573,692 [\$12,003,072] with Barnum's half of the profits being \$87,850 [\$1,838,042]. Additionally he received a \$32,426 [\$678,433] bonus based on the show's income, which brought his take to a little more than \$120,000 [over \$2,500,000]. Both receipts and profits were by far the highest for the four years, 1877 to 1880, for which we have financial records of Barnum's five year affiliation with the Flatfoots. ²³

While the Barnum figures are undoubtedly correct, the numbers for Cooper and Bailey are open to question. The advertising claim in early September that the show had made \$300,000 can be disregarded. The only other reference to the company's profit appeared in the route book where W. G. Crowley wrote that as of 9 October Cooper and Bailey had divided \$473,941.16 [\$9,916,032] between them, only about \$100,000 less than the Barnum show's entire revenues and more than twice its profit. We have no indication of the London's receipts. While this profit seems fantastic and its publication in the show's route book implausible to say the least, there is reason for accepting its accuracy. The combined Barnum and London Circus paid dividends of \$602,000 [\$12,595,347] in 1882, and \$560,000 [\$11,957,932] in 1883, demonstrating that such profits, while exceptional, were possible. It also should be kept in mind that every account of Cooper and Bailey's 1880 season declared it an enormous success; after all, they had one of the greatest attractions in circus history. For Bailey the year was the fulfillment of a dream. George Middleton, an associate of his, recalled in his memoirs that, "Bailey had told me that if he ever got hold of Barnum's name there would never be a tent made large enough to hold the people, and when he did his words were made true." Bailey's remark revealed not only his own ambition, but also the immense earning power of Barnum's name. His imprimatur was as valuable in his day as Walt Disney's is in ours.24

Bailey, nervous by temperament, must have gone into anxiety overload when on16 November, while in New York, Barnum had "excruciating abdominal pain and had to be assisted into his ex-son-in-law Samuel Hurd's house." He had an obstruction in his intestines which was painful enough to require morphine. He rallied, but in early December relapsed. He asked for prayers: "In a spirit of firm reliance on the omnipotent arm of Him who doeth all things well, I hereby request the prayers of all

the congregations of Bridgeport for His blessing to rest upon me, with thanksgiving for all the mercies which I have hitherto so abundantly received at His hands." It looked like he was checking out.

But he rallied once again. On 7 January 1881 he was well enough to return home to Bridgeport where he weighed himself at the train station upon arrival. He weighed 143 pounds, down from 215 prior to his illness. Bowser was delighted his boss was back: "I am very glad to see him here once more and hope before many weeks he will be able to climb stairs to this office."

It took a while. Bowser's diary entry for 8 March 1881 spoke volumes, "PTB in office for 1st time since Nov. 16, 1880." It had been a long convalescence. Within a week he headed for Florida where he stayed until about 10 April. He missed the show's 28 March debut at Madison Square Garden, not seeing his circus until 11 April.²⁵

The significance of Barnum's illness, from a commercial point of view, was that he was unavailable to do what he did best—promote the circus by entrancing newspaper men. He was the master of the interview. This deprived the show of countless opportunities for free publicity. It was as if the marketing department had shut down.

That in itself was cause for worry, but if he died, and he came close to doing so in December, Bailey and Hutchinson would have lost their most important asset. One of the major reasons for the success of Barnum's show business ventures was the reputation he had developed over the years for presenting clean, wholesome, quality entertainment. The public had long forgiven him for the "humbugs" of his youth. Partners or leasees such as Seth B. Howes, Hyatt Frost, W. C. Coup, Pardon Older, John O'Brien, and George Bailey all understood what his name meant, and eagerly perpetuated the perception that Barnum's contribution to the entertainments bearing his name was greater than in actuality. Were Bailey and Hutchinson unable to maintain the deception that Barnum was in charge of his circus, formulating the performance and choosing the attractions, the result would have been catastrophic. Barnum's Circus had to have Barnum.

Barnum and his wife sailed for Europe on 18 May 1881. By then he had does his part, talking to reporters in New York and Philadelphia. Not for nothing, he included in his 26 August agreement with Bailey and Hutchinson a clause allowing him to travel anywhere, any time. The Barnums returned to American on 4 July. 26

The New York Clipper of 9 July 1881 published a letter from Barnum, dated 21 June from Southport, England in which he wrote that after "searching among all the chief novelties in Europe fitted for my great show, I have selected the very best, and secured engagements with them to open in the consolidated Barnum-London Combination at Madison-square Garden next November." If he wasn't traveling with his circus, he was at least doing business for it.

The *Clipper* carried sporadic news on the Barnum and London Circus in January and February. The show had leased a number of animals to a stage show at Niblo's Garden in New York. Frank Hyatt went to England and

the continent to close contracts and acquire animals. He returned with four giraffes, two of which were broken to harness, and other animals. The company took an ad to unload obsolete wood block cuts from James Reilly and Company of New York, and the Courier Company of Buffalo. Dozens of designs were listed ranging in size from a one sheet to a sixty-four sheet. Descriptions included Chariot Procession, Congress of all Nations, Siamese Twins, Zulu, Horned Woman, and Doves among many others. In February Hutchinson knew he had broken into the big time when his portrait and biography appeared on the cover of the *Clipper*. Bailey had been similarly honored the previous November. 27



Another poster illustrating the mother and daughter pachyderms. The Cooper and Bailey Circus engaged in an opposition battle with Forepaugh in Cleveland when this bill was posted. Forepaugh played Cleveland on 5 and 6 August. This stand was the first known that Barnum's offer for the baby elephant was used in Cooper and Bailey press releases. Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collec-

Ready for the Road, New Haven (Connecticut) Evening Register, 21 February 1881, p. 4.

During the past few weeks there have been at the car shops of the Consolidated road in this city nine cars belonging to the Barnum, Bailey & Hutchinson circus.

which have been undergoing repairs and being remodeled and repaired for use during the coming season. Three of the cars, which have now left the shop and gone to Bridgeport, are those used by the advertising corps which go ahead of the show announcing the coming of the great, original and only "greatest show on earth." These cars are so fitted up as to carry the posters, lithographs and paper which is necessary to the advertising of the show and also furnish sleeping accommodations for the army of advertisers, bill posters, etc. In one of these there has been placed a steam calliope, and another car that has undergone an overhauling has been fitted up to hold another of these steam pianos. The gaily decorated exteriors of the cars have been retouched, the running gear strengthened and repaired, until the cars are good as new. Six of the running cars which have been in the shop—only two of them remaining there at the present time—are sleeping cars used to transport the proprietors and owners from place to place. Economy of space has been the principal thing sought after in the construction of these cars, and not a bit of room is wasted, the only parties being given state rooms in the cars being the proprietors and a very few of the principal performers like Mr. and Mrs. Dockrill.

Two cars only remain in the shop at the present time, and one of these is to be fitted up in part for General Tom Thumb and wife. These diminutive people, in company with Messrs. Bailey and Hutchinson, two of the proprietors of the show, visited the car shops on Friday last and arrangements were made for this diminutive couple. A stateroom is to be built in one end of the car, somewhat smaller than those commonly used, and this is to be fitted up with the necessary diminutive washstand and other toilet necessaries. Furniture of diminutive size is to be put into this room especially for the use of this Lilliputian couple, and everything possible for their convenience and comfort is to be provided, although there will be nothing particularly luxurious in their quarters. Work on the car will be begun during the latter part of this week or the early part of next week. In the same cars will also be placed, in all probability, though this has not been definitely decided upon, exceptionally large rooms for the accommodation of the exceptionally tall men and fat women who form a part of the attractions of the great show during the present season. For their use it is necessary to provide berths of exceptional length and strength, and the car fitted for these curious people will be almost as much of a curiosity as the people

All the cars have been newly painted in a green color, and each has across the top of the side the words, "P. T. Barnum, J. A. Bailey & J. L. Hutchinson, sole owners." The panels on the lower half of the car bear these legends: P. T. Barnum's Great Show on Earth. The Great London Circus and Sanger's Royal British Menagerie. Great International Ten Allied Shows.

This was the first year of three ring circuses in America. Besides the Barnum show, and W. C. Coup also exhibited in triplicate. The Barnum show was the bigger of the two. In general, people disliked the new layout, complaining that they couldn't see it all, or were distracted by all the activity in the rings. The American circus was a one ring affair for its first eighty years. The two ring circus was less than ten years old, and widely criticized. A cartoon from the period showed a severely cross-eyed man walking down the street, telling a friend that he had just been to a three ring circus.

The cross-eyed imagery also appeared in the first editorial comment about the increased number of rings. The term "ring" as used in the following notice, referred to a metropolitan political organization, almost always corrupt, such as the notorious Tweed Ring that looted New York City in the 1860s and 1870s.

New Haven (Connecticut) Evening Register, 4 March 1881, p. 4.

Barnum's circus during the coming season will have three rings in which there will be performances at the same time. Three rings in a circus are about as desirable as one "ring" in a city. They are expensive, and don't give satisfaction. Even a cross-eyed man can't look at three rings at one time.—Norristown Herald.

There were hints of friction between the Barnum and Bailey-Hutchinson camps throughout the year. Bowser documented one on 9 February 1881: "Bailey and Hutch told P.T.B. that the wagon marked Bailey & Hutchinson had also the name of London Circus on it. The latter name not being on same. I brand this as one lie told the Greatest Showman on Earth and consequently the other parties are Liars. The above were (sic) marked 'Bailey & Hutchinson Allied Shows." It appears the two had excluded Barnum's name from a wagon, and apparently tried to cover that fact up. One would think conflict was unavoidable between such strong-willed men. Barnum was seventy years old, twice the age of Hutchinson and Bailey, and retained the sensibilities and tastes of his era, as his young partners did of theirs. He had, in fact, made a name for himself in the show business before either of them was born.

Further strain between the two factions was reported in a letter from Charles Cary, listed as secretary of the circus, but in fact Barnum's representative on the show, to Bowser on 25 April. He wrote, in part: "Charlie Benedict has been discharged & and I suppose his wife [rider Mattie Jackson] will leave with him. I am sorry, and still more sorry for Mr. Barnum so much in the control of these men. I don't quite understand their tactics. I shall see and have a talk with him if an opportunity occurs. They do not give me much of a chance to see him. They use me all right, but I shall as long as I remain with the Co. do my duty to Mr. B.

"Will write confidentially to you at length soon. Be careful what you write as my last letter from you was opened by <u>Lord Hutchinson</u>. . . .

"I am only waiting for Mr. B to be himself and I am confident all will be straightened out." By July Cary had had enough and resigned on the 7th.

The following is an example of two prominent themes that appeared in the publicity throughout the year: that Barnum conceived and directed the enterprise and was the key decision maker; and that the show's expense was astronomical.

Barnum's Latest, Bangor (Maine) Daily Whig and Courier, 12 March 1881, p. 3.

Mr. P. T. Barnum, it now appears, had hardly become convalescent when he began giving his attention to arranging for a show for the coming season such as would eclipse all his previous efforts. The result has been the consolidation of his last year's circus with the great London show. Mr. Dave Thomas, Mr. Barnum's press agent of the past few years, said that the show will be known as "Barnum's London Consolidation," and will stand without an equal in the world. It was the original intention of Mr. Barnum to so divide the consolidations as to have one part of it travel through Europe and the other to remain in America, but, on careful consideration, he changed his mind and determined to preserve it intact and keep it in America. Mr. Barnum says that his tour through the country this season will be an experiment, inasmuch as he views the financial result with uncertainly. He considers the show, as now constituted, to be of unexpected and, in a measure, unprof-



Poster from 1881 featuring the new Bridgeport winter quarters, constructed in late 1880. Note perspective of building on right, making the structure look a mile long. This poster was used again in 1882 with the addition of portraits of the three owners at the top center. Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

itable, proportions, but yet it has been forced upon him by a combination of circumstances; and it now remains a question with him whether or not it will pay him to drag more than 100 cars all over the country during the season. He says that he takes courage in the fact that his new partners, Messrs. James A. Bailey and James L. Hutchinson, are men of means and pluck. . . .

Thomas was nudging the truth a bit in stating the company moved on 100 railroad cars. In fact, it traveled on fifty-three, plus three in advance. A contract signed by the New York, New Haven, and Hudson Rail Road Co. and the show on 16 February, detailed five moves in Connecticut and Massachusetts in mid-May, the circus paying \$300 [\$6276] per jump for the short hauls. The cars came mainly from Cooper and Bailey, and included the flats, stocks and advance car purchased from the J. G. Brill Company in Philadelphia in January 1880.²⁸ The

Barnum flats were sold to the John Robinson Circus late in 1880.

James A. Bailey acted as general agent and directed all aspects of the advance. Charles W. Fuller's title was General Railroad Director; we would call him the railroadcontractor. J. E. Warner and Matt Leland were in charge of excursions. The fiery John W. Hamilton was called a special agent; in reality, he was in charge of the opposition brigade. Richard G. Ball was contracting agent. W. W. Durand, G. J. Guilford and D. S. Thomas were the press agents. Except for Thomas, all were former Cooper and Bailey men as were most of the men on the three advertising cars. Two of the advance cars used steam calliopes to attract attention. The third had an organ. Gus Bernard was in charge of the stereoscopic show which showed magic lantern slides of the wonders that awaited patrons. He generally traveled a week ahead of the show.29

Shortly before the 28 March opening, a reporter for a New Haven, Connecticut newspaper interviewed James A. Bailey who demonstrated real talent for expounding the party line, telling the credulous journalist that the shows were combined for that year only, and that the circus was so big that he would be content if it broke even.

Nevertheless, his comments about the electric light, reasons for not sending a unit to Europe, and audience class distinctions are revealing.

Manager Bailey Talking, New Haven (Connecticut) Sunday Union, 20 March 1881, p. 1.

In New York just now the Great Barnum and London Consolidation seems the social subject of conversation, notwithstanding the furore (sic) over "Hazel Kirke," "Billee Taylor," and long distance pedestrianism. Rumors of its unusual proportions are rife in all directions, and to get at the fact a Union representative visited New York vesterday with a resolve to beard the lion in his den. At the Grand Central Hotel Manager Bailey was discovered at the telegraph window, sending off cablegrams. Our natural reportorial modesty deterred us from interrupting further than to nudge his elbow. Without looking up from his writing, he replied sharply, "No; I don't drink; I'll take a cigar." Sending off other telegrams, he wheeled rapidly, took one glance and was master of the situation. "Come to my room and I will talk," he said. Any person who has never visited the store room of a prominent manager during the organizing season has something to live for. There were various styles of portable chairs, a miniature Roman chariot, improved chandeliers for the electric light, models of railway cars and cages, lithographs of elephants in all known and unknown postures, even, to standing on their heads; model of a sectional center pole, novel wood cuts of people and wild beasts, papier-machie plan of the three rings, tubular boiler and engine, double back action ticket boxes, elephant shackles, cordage, hoops, banners, balloons, Chinese lanterns, ring carpets trapeze trappings, etc., etc., etc., "You see," said Mr. Bailey, "this paraphernalia is for our special use, and as circuses copy our improvements the first opportunity, we keep it rather retired until needed.'

"It is the opinion of many managers that, metaphorically speaking, you have a white elephant on your hands, in other words, that your company is too large to travel."

"Yes, the consolidation was effected with the view of taking one-half to Europe, but various obstacles arose, the most prominent of which was Mr. Barnum's illness. The matter of running the whole in the United States this season was under discussion for weeks. But most of our contracts with important artists both at home and abroad were made early last Fall, and as no change could be affected in this direction, it was determined to give the people of the United States the benefit of what had been designed for two continents. But let me assure you, it is for this season only."

"Is it true, you will give three shows daily?"

"Yes, in all cities of medium size, and often in the larger ones. We find that families attend the morning exhibition to avoid the crowds and excitement inseparable with the afternoon and evening entertainments. Besides, the public schools are getting woke up to the advantages afforded by these large menageries. We are in daily receipt of letters from school officials all over the country, seeking information pointing to the general attendance of the public and private schools. Our great menagerie this season will afford a grander and more comprehensive study of the animal kingdom than any other collection in the world, outside the famous Zoological Garden in London and the Jardin d'Ac-

climatation in Paris."

"How about the electric light?"

"Well this wonderful discovery has never been shown at its best, at least in this country. An isolated burner at near intervals on the street does not demonstrate its beauties or its power; neither does a single chandelier in front of a canvass. We propose to make the electric light a feature, and for the first time in its history show it for what it is. Our system involves no less than twenty-one chandeliers, and our entire canvass city, interior and exterior, will be as bright as noon-day. The public generally, rich and poor, patrons and non-patrons, can see and examine the light, for the engine and apparatus will be located day and night where all will have access. Yes, our company will do for the electric light what its discoverers have long sought of individuals and corporations, viz., run it for its practical value."

"Mr. Bailey, there is a rumor, almost too good to be true, that you will spare the public the infliction of wax figures, stuffed snakes and birds, and cheap panoramic views, that go to make up the average traveling museum."

"Gone, thank heaven, all gone, sold at auction, and this season will do duty in other fields. Our procession will show 100 vehicles of various descriptions, but every one will contain either wild animals or other valuable property. We have about ninety cars and 300 draught horses, but we have no room to drag this trash about the country."

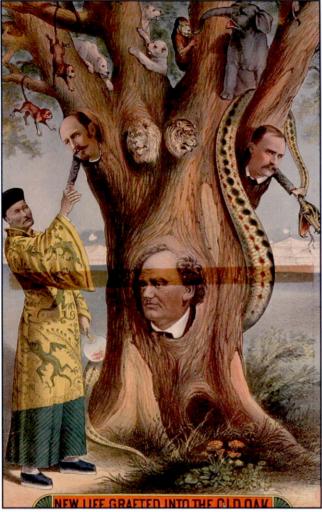
"Mr. Bailey, in theatrical management the policy differs as to which particular class it is the most profitable to cater to. Often the manager finds his profit in the masses, again [against?] in the aristocracy."

"Well, education and refinement cannot be expected to lower its standard, but experience proves that the masses will always follow where the more favored lead. Mr. Barnum's immense fortune is due to this policy of catering to the best. His employees—artists and laborers—know that an imprudent word or careless act is the signal for dismissal. It is a knowledge of this scrupulous care that attracts the great and good of all denominations, and packs his audiences with a class of people rarely seen at an amusement exhibition of any description."

"In the matter of canvass, I can only say our spread is the largest I have ever seen and I presume there is nothing in the world like it. The three rings are a necessity and not a luxury as many suppose. Our performers were engaged for the two continents and the three rings must be occupied continually to get them all before the public. The extraordinary concentration of arenic talent will startle the world. Our show for the season of 1881 will be known in the amusement records of America as the greatest artistic success of the times, but anything like proportionate profit we do not expect; indeed we will be satisfied for this one season if we come out whole."

The entrance of Mr. Young, the treasurer, with a handful of checks to be signed, brought the interview to an abrupt close. The visit had been brief, but it had brought us in contract with the gentleman, who of all others, Mr. Barnum has chosen to carry out his ideas and perpetuate his fame.

A torch light parade on the evening of Saturday, 26 March, took twenty minutes to pass a given point. 30 It included the two great telescoping tableau wagons, built in England and brought to America for Howes Great



This rather displeasing image of "New Life Grafted into the Old Oak" celebrates the merger of the Barnum and Great London Circuses. The artist did a terrible job on Bailey's and Hutchinson's arms; they look like ventriloquist dummies. Note baby elephant above Hutchinson's head. This lithograph has been trimmed with the top and bottom cut off. Ringling Museum of Art. Tibbals Digital Collection.

London in 1871. One had a globe on top; the other a statue of an elephant, both of which could be raised or lowered as needed. More flash was provided by the Nepture tableau wagon and a beautiful organ wagon, both from the Barnum show. Two magnificent shell band chariots built by Fielding Bros. in New York also appeared in the march. One began life on the Van Amburgh Menagerie and eventually joined Cooper and Bailey when it acquired the Howes Great London Circus in late 1878. The other one started with the L. B. Lent Circus and in due course became part of the Barnum show in 1876. Other wagons in the parade included Mardi Gras floats built for Howes Great London; a bell wagon and a dragon pony float, both ex-Howes; and a calliope, origin unknown. A good number of cages also went down the streets, but many of them were lost in railroad accidents late in the season. The Barnum and London parade improved considerably over the next few years with the addition of a group of Fielding-built cages and nursery rhyme-themed pony floats.

The power packed performance had eighteen displays, nine of which utilized all three rings. It began with a walk around that included, besides the usual supernumeraries, Mr. and Mrs. Tom Thumb, Chang the Chinese giant, the bearded woman, the baby elephant Columbia, the giant horse, the giant ox, and a pair of giraffes in harness. Richard Dockrill with the Trakene stallions in ring one and Charles White with six trained oxen in ring three were the first acts. Ground and lofty tumbling throughout the tent was next.

After that came Louise Boshell on the slack wire, Edward Baldwin balancing on chairs, and May Antonio juggling on the wire. Then the first riding act took place. William Dutton was the principal male bareback rider and Adelaide Cordona the principal female rider. Veteran clown John Foster appeared in the center ring during their turns, allowing the two to rest for a moment after a particularly arduous trick.

The next display included Geyer and Aston in their contortion and posing act, the Boisset brothers on the horizontal bars, and the Hungarian jugglers Karoley and Augusta Ordey. After that Emma Lake and Mattie Benedict put their manege horses through their paces in rings one and three. Iron jaw artist Lottie Baldwin, wrestlers Edwin Bibby and William Hoefler, and Scottish sports performer William Elder were next.

Bareback rider Frank Melville was the first artist to have no competition for the audience's attention. He was accompanied by the "popular German dialect clown Bonnie Runnels [who] will make himself heard during the breathing spells and extract a tear from the most stoic." When Melville was finished, the Boisset brothers made their second appearance with acrobatics in ring one. The center ring featured the French Troupe Davene, gymnasts, and the third circle had the Ricardo brothers, also doing gymnastics.

Afterwards Adelaide Cordona returned in ring one to perform the "Queen of the Flaming Zone" routine, popularized by Linda Jeal on the Barnum show a couple of years earlier, in which she rode her horse "through hoops of living fire" while Don Gerinimo Bell, her husband, rode in a hurricane hurdle act in the third ring. Three rings of Japanese performers, mostly jugglers, followed.

Then came the highlight of the show, the great Elise Dockrill, the "Empress of the Arena" herself, whose bareback act on a "Naked Horse" was unmatched. Ricardo Bell provided comic relief when she needed to rest. Afterward, the twenty Barnum military elephants appeared in rings one and three. William Newman and George Arstingstall, both top notch elephant men, presented the pachyderms.

Josep Leon's stilt walkers, the Lorella brothers' comic dance, and Charles Middleton and Charles Bernard's wrestling followed. The Davene troupe's gymnastics, Lottie Baldwin's single trapeze turn, and Hawley and Baisley on the flying trapeze were next. Elise Dockrill and Frank Melville then returned, she in her wild six-horse Roman standing riding act, and he in his six-horse Courier of Rome routine. The latter was a variation of Andrew

Ducrow's justly renowned Courier of St. Petersburg act.

The show closed with what was modestly called the "greatest act of leaping ever presented to an audience in any country under the sun." Frank Gardner and William Batcheller headed up a group of talented athletes who somersaulted over horses and elephants.

Many of the performers were from the 1880 edition of Cooper and Bailey: Frank Melville and his wife Louise Boshell, William Dutton, Gerinimo "Jerry" Bell and his wife Adelaide Cordona, William Elder, and the Japanese troupe. Veterans of the 1880 Barnum show included Richard and Elise Dockrill, Emma Lake, and the Davene troupe.

General Tom Thumb and his wife, and Chang the Chinese giant were heavily promoted in the advertising. All three appeared in the menagerie before each big show performance, and participated in the opening tournament. The baby elephant and her mother were the featured animal exhibition. Sawyer's Original Georgia Cabin Shouters, an African-American group of singers, and four Caledonian pipers provided music.

C. E. Kohl, a protégé of Hutchinson's, ran the side show. A living skeleton, bearded lady, armless man, long bearded man, Maori giant, performing monkeys, albinos, a big, beautiful woman, and a Punch and Judy show were among the artists in the kid show. In addition, Barnum pulled what he claimed was the original Fiji mermaid out of his attic. A scaly goat and replicas of instruments of torture from the Spanish Inquisition rounded out the exhibits. The band was allegedly composed of Seneca Indians playing tradition tribal instruments such as bass and snare drums, and a tuba.

Most of the department heads and assistants came from Cooper and Bailey. Assistant elephant boss William Newman, canvas boss Charles McLean, and press agent Dave Thomas, Barnum men all, were exceptions. Bandleader James S. Robinson was a Great London alumnus. So was Merritt Young, the treasurer.

The Greatest Show on Earth opened in New York's Madison Square Garden on Monday, 28 March. Unlike today, multi-day engagements in large cities generally opened on Mondays.

Mr. Barnum's Great Show, New York (New York) Times, 29 March 1881, p. 2.

Madison Square Garden has seldom held a greater multitude than that which gathered there last evening to witness the introductory exhibition of the combined shows owned and managed by Messrs. Barnum, Bailey and Hutchinson. It was asserted that at least 9000 persons were present. Whether this estimate be correct or not the seating capacity of the vast building was taxed its fullest limits. The Garden has been divided into two great compartments, in one of which is exhibited an unusually fine menagerie, a band of war-like Indians, Chang, the Chinese giant; Tom Thumb and his pretty, graceful spouse; a man with a remarkably long beard; but happily no human monstrosities. In the centre of the other compartment are three rings encircled by numerous rows of seats slanting from the floor to the roof of the building. The entire circus performance was eminently satisfactory. The claim of Mr. Barnum and his partners as to the multiplicity of their forces is not a

vain boast, since it must be admitted that they undoubtedly control the largest, and in many respects the finest, exhibition of the kind seen here. The costumes, banners, and other circus paraphernalia are surpassingly rich.



Elise Dockrill was one of the stars of the 1881 show, always receiving glowing notices. Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

Last evening's entertainment was opened with a glittering procession, in which mounted knights and dames, bespangled Turks borne in palanquins, strapped to the backs of elephants and camels, Chinese mandarins, and other personages figured. When these had withdrawn the ringmaster introduced the most notable curiosities, including the baby elephant, Six Ukraine and Trakene stallions, splendid specimens of the equine race, were drilled by Mr. Dockrill in one ring, while in another, Mr. Charles White persuaded several common oxen to do things that oxen of conservative habits could not be induced to attempt. A remarkably clever double horizontal bar act was performed by the Boisset Brothers in the middle ring, while other feats were done by Geyer and Ashton and two Hungarian jugglers in the other circles. Frank Melville, "Don" Gerinimo, Mme. Elise Dockrill, and Mme. Cordona were seen in bare-back riding. The doings of a troupe of Japanese jugglers elicited a fair share of applause. One of the most interesting and certainly most amusing incidents was the drilling of 20 trained elephants in military evolutions. The animals acted with astonishing docility. Among the many other features of the long programme were intrepid trapeze acts by Hawley and Baisley and three young women, a "leap for life" by Lottie Baldwin, and leaping by a well-trained corps of tumblers. The show can be seen twice a day for a short season.

The Barnum press department used the *Times's* assessment as a press release to newspapers in advance of the show's appearance. With the exception of the last sentence this review was copied word for word in the circus's advance publicity. ³¹

Presumably because the District of Columbia was the second town on the schedule, the *Washington Post* sent a reporter to the opening. He made a number of observations that were noted again and again during the season: the show attracted a higher class of patrons than other circuses, three rings were a bad idea, and that the circus operated on a moral plain.

In Madison Square Garden, The Washington (District of Columbia) Post, 30 March 1881, p. 4.

New York, March 28.—When a circus exhibits in a place like Madison Square Garden the usual small boy seems out of place. There is no dirt ring on the edge of which he can lay at full length and enjoy the saw-dust dirt kicked up in his face. He has to sit perfectly quiet on a chair and be careful that he gives expression to no unseemly noise to shock the handsomely dressed lady sitting next to him. Looking over the immense crowd, numbering thousands of people, which attended the opening of Barnum's and Bailey & Hutchinson's combined circuses last night one was struck with the high order of intelligence and refinement which was exhibited. The rough class was not represented. And this audience is in keeping with the rest of the show. Everything is new and clean, the costumes, the cages, the decorations, even the coats worn by the property men. There are three rings, however, and a man must have three pairs of eyes or be cross-eyed to take in everything, and it makes him uneasy to think that while he is looking at one good thing he misses another. This is the only drawback, and may be excused. The papers here to-day, in criticizing the performance, speak of it in the highest terms. Barnum's latest idea is the employment of a minister to visit the Sundayschools and educational institutions to announce the presence of "the great moral show." This is expected to prove very successful. . . .

The trade press also covered the debut. These notices from the *New York Clipper* and the *New York Dramatic News* are among the most cogent, insightful, and knowledgeable the author has ever read. With the possible exception of Edward Hoagland, nobody writes circus reviews like this anymore.

Opening of Barnum's Circus Campaign, New York Clipper, 2 April 1881, p. 30.

If the magic of Barnum's name had not been appealed to, and even if there had not been a lavish outlay for a preliminary fanfare of trumpets and a street festival that exceeded the splendor of the fetes of the spectacular dramas, still the opening performance on Monday evening, March 28, of the combined circus organizations, the London and Barnum's "Greatest Show on Earth," would have been a great success. Its merits in every detail were such as to deserve the award of metropolitan favor. Madison-square Garden never contained a greater nor a more fashionable audience. When

asked how much money there was in the house, John Hamilton, the business-manager, replied: "Barrels of itbales of it-too much to count;" and he was probably correct in his rough estimate. People were turned away on Monday evening by the hundred, and the sidewalk speculators reaped a rich harvest at an early hour. It was, all through, an astounding "boom" in the circus business. As a show, from first to last, the new organization was a splendid success. The menagerie department as presented on Monday night is probably the most perfect ever shown in the metropolis. The animals are genuine roarers, and the hyenas, tigers, leopards and lions, performed in separate cages by several spangled "lion kings," all looked fierce and angry enough to lend excitement to the scenes in which they acted. Chang, the urbane Chinese giant, our roistering old friend Tom Thumb and his sedate little wife, the matronly elephant, and her baby, the troops of trained camels, cows, oxen, zebras, seals, rhinoceros, hippopotami and divers[e] nameless beasts and fowls, all came up to expectation and won the favor of a very brilliant audience. Everybody was present—all the city notabilities, the men of the clubs, the politicians, the [word obscured], the society people-all turned out in as grand a phalanx as if it were an opera-night or Mrs. Grundy had struck hands amicably with Barnum.

The circus part of the entertainment, however, was a great surprise to everyone. In the first place, there was no flavor of the circus about it-no smell of stables, no offensive pungency of tan-bark aroma. All was clean, proper, neat and odorless. Twenty electric lights shed a soft radiance in every corner of the garden. There were, as had been promised, three rings in a row—the middle one being devoted to ground and aerial acrobatic exercises, and the outer ones to simultaneous acts of horsemanship. On the programme there were detailed seventeen triple acts in these three rings, beginning with a double quadrille of equestrians and equestriennes, and a march of elephants and curiosities around the garden on a track outside of the circles. This march, headed by the band in gorgeous hussar uniforms, was a brilliant affair, and opened the performances very auspiciously. Although the audience was inclined to be hypercritical, as became its metropolitan composition, this novel display thawed it out completely at the very outset, and the rapid succession of first-class acts, without a drag or a hitch, maintained the impetus of the first enthusiasm at the most inspiring pitch throughout the evening. The management was excellent, both in the auditorium and behind the red curtain, for there was neither intermission nor delay for a moment. Every person was ready for his act on time; there was no interchanging of acts, and, although the performances were carried on in three rings, there was not the slightest confusion. Such management all around is a surprising evidence of generalship. After the pageant of equestrians and the procession of the curiosities, came at once and without any delay or flurry the entertainment proper. The triple acts were designated on the programme as "displays" for lack of a more concise term. The first display comprised the performance of Mr. Dockrill's trained stallions in one ring, while in the other sawdust circle Charles White put half a dozen common plow oxen through a series of tricks and manoeuvres that



were astonishing, such as balancing on a seesaw board, firing pistols, walking lame and posing on pedestals. The country editors, who were out in force on the first night, whooped right out at this sight, and gave many learned commendations as experts. The trained horses were in their usual good form, but the uncouth and clumsy cattle shared the interest with the graceful steeds. The fifth display brought in three immense parties of vaulters and tumblers, who occupied the rings with some of the neatest kind of carpet business. All were competent for their tasks—there were no dummies in tights, and the keen audience on the watch for a flaw, were quick to perceive the excellence of the force. In the sixth display was the only hiatus. Louise Boshell, the wire-performer, was to appear in one ring while May Antonio, a slack-wire juggler, and Edward Baldwin, a very neat Herculean club-swinger, occupied the other two. The first-named for some reason unexplained, failed to appear; but the last two were so satisfactory as to make the audience lose sight of the omission altogether. Up to this point in the programme there had been noticed an absence of the old-time clown. There had, indeed, been a very quaint and effective variation of the old business, but the audience did not "tumble to it" for some time. From the first of the perforuniform similar to that of a ringmaster, and with no marks of the funny man in his face or costume. This indi-

Magnificent Globe wagon with telescopic mechanism in parade in Madison, Wisconsin in middle or late 1880s. Howard Tibbals Collection.

vidual was very officious, rushing hither and thither directing the ring hands, and striving to get a finger in every piece of work going on in the rings simultaneously, but yet doing nothing but obstruct the workers. He was supposed at first to be a superintendent; but when one of his most earnest efforts resulted in his being flattened beneath the carpet that was laid on one of the rings the point became apparent and the audience roared. The same style of thing has been mildly attempted before, but never thoroughly accomplished. The person who assumed the part on Monday night is an actor in his way, and carried it off well. As he worked it up it is something new in clowning, and deserves encouragement, if for no other reason than that it breaks the monotony of the old ring business.

The seventh display was made up of William Dutton's neat bareback acts in the first ring and Adelaide Cordona's equally neat and graceful riding in the third ring, while John Foster, the clown occupied the intermediate circle with the ringmaster. Foster was by no means a bore as a jester, but he was not allowed much of a chance during the evening, and, except a couple of chalk-faced mummers who

contented themselves during the evening by drawing laughter by means of acrobatic and pantomimic witticisms, there was nothing in the performance to give color to the suspicion that the ghost of the old clown of our boyhood's days was to be made to limp before us again. Display eleven was called a "Grand Picture," and was given to Frank Melville in one ring, while the other two remained unoccupied. Frank's first horse was a very sedate and modest animal. The gait was less disturbing than that of a rockinghorse, and the act (an excellent and neat one) suffered in consequence. That horse is very skillful in simulating a canter when he is going no faster than a walk, but the public detects the game of the learned equine. Mr. Melville closed his act on his Arabian trotting mare, and the excellence of the performance sent him out of the ring blushing under enthusiastic rounds of applause. Bonnie Runnells tried some Dutch clowning in this act, but did not push his claims on notice very earnestly. The next feature on the programme was a remarkably neat one, and seemed to please the immense audience particularly. The rings were occupied by three troupes of specialists in gymnastic work—the Boisset Brothers in one, the Davene Troupe of three shapely young ladies and a spry male partner in the other, and the three Ricardo Brothers in the third. Each performance was as near perfection in grace and diverting features as we can imagine. Then came the thirteenth display, Mme. Cordona appearing in the first ring in a hurdle act, while Senor Bell, "the Brazilian hurricane hurdle-rider," simultaneously duplicated her feats in the third circle, the entire act being carried off by both riders with an exciting rush, and finishing effectively with a leap through flaming hoops.

Three troupes of Japanese jugglers performed some very neat feats of juggling and balancing to make up the fourteenth display, and then Mme. Dockrill had a "Picture" all to herself in the ring, performing in her usual reckless style and bursting balloons as extravagantly as if her manager owned a paper-mill. Twenty trained elephants in a really marvelous military drill and waltz, with other sylph-like tricks, made up the best triple feature. Display seventeen brought back the graceful and favored Davenes in a neat trapeze act, Lottie Baldwin on a single trapeze and Hawley and Baisley, "the flying men," in a double-trapeze act, which was made interesting by some thrilling leaps. For the eighteenth display Mme. Dockrill rode six horses in the first ring, while Frank Melville rode six horses in the third, with the ringmaster whooping them up with the aid of the clowns, in the second circle. This act was well managed, the business being identical of the part of the lady and gentleman, and carried on simultaneously, with the effect of arousing great enthusiasm. In this act Mme. Dockrill rode superbly—better than before, when she had no visible rivalry to spur her on to effort. One of the displays of the rings, which was quite interesting, was the simultaneous progress of a Greco-Roman wrestling match between Bibby and Hoefler, feats of dental strength and grit by "Miss Lottie," and "Caledonian games," comprising high-kicking, vaulting with the pole, etc. The wrestle was of the show order, but nevertheless diverting, although the touch of the athletes was comparatively dainty. A performance that held a high place when among so much excellence, where everything was superlative, was the occupation of the two equestrian arenas by Emma Lake and Mattie Benedict in their neat rival manege acts. The riding was graceful, the riders were shapely and handsome, and the audience enjoyed to the full the opportunity of instituting comparisons. This opportunity, afforded so often during the evening, furnished a new and pleasurable sensation to the spectators. The entertainment concluded with battoute-leaping over elephants and other obstacles. The distances covered were something beyond belief, and therefore should not be told, but seen. The entire performance on the first night was almost without a flaw; and that the show not only won applause, but aroused enthusiasm in New York, where it was supposed that long ago the fashionables and generally people of mature years had relegated the circus to the "demnition bow-wows," is eloquent proof that the strain after novelty in ring-entertainment has at last resulted in

The New Circus, New York Dramatic News, 2 April 1881,

At last Mr. Barnum's name is attached to the greatest show on earth in reality, as well as upon paper. The opening performance of the Barnum-Bailey-Hutchinson allied shows, which was given at the Madison Square Garden on Monday evening of this week, was so great an affair, indeed, that it almost bewildered the entire audience. It is certainly impossible for any person to follow all the features of the programme carefully enough to tell everything that is done, for the reason that there are no less than three distinct performances going on at the same time all through the evening. There are thirty-three separate acts upon the bill, and it is worthy of record that the most of them are new.

The performance begins with the regular old-fashioned overture by the band, which is followed by the spectacular pageant that has been seen in every circus since Noah's time. This is no better than any of the others of the same kind that have been brought before the public hitherto, excepting that it employs a larger number of people, and more square yards of elephants, than have been seen in connection with any single circus parade before. From this point out the programme differs materially from those ordinarily provided.. The curiosities of the Museum, which include the fat and ungainly Tom Thumb, the Chinese Giant, the bearded woman, the baby elephant, the largest horse we ever saw, a tremendous ox, and a pair of giraffes broken to harness, are first shown in all three of the rings, and then the performing animals, the tumbling, and the regular feats of the equestrian and gymnastic order follow. On the list of performers are Louise Boshell, a green-tighted slack-wire performer; May Antonio, another of the same kind, in different leg gear; Wm. Dutton, a somersault rider; Emma Lake, side-saddle equestrienne; Mattie Benedict, who does the same line of business; the Boisset Brothers, horizontal bar gymnasts; the Japanese troupe, headed by Katsnoshin; the Ricardo Brothers, gymnasts; the Davene troupe, Hawley and Baisley, flying trapeze performers, and probably the greatest collection of tumblers and somersault throwers that has ever existed in this country or anywhere

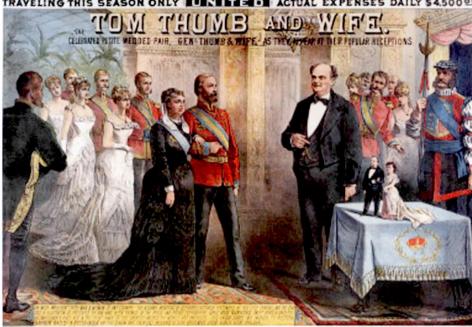
These are the ordinary features. The most remarkable performers in the company are Madame Dockrill, Frank Melville, Madame Cordona, and Edwin Bibby, the Grecocourse, the chief feature of the TRAVELING THIS S. show. She has every aid to make her acts popular, as she is brought before the public alone, while two of the rings are empty. Besides this, the different people in the enclosure all unite in working up the enthusiasm by shouting, waving their hands, and doing everything they can to create excitement. Madame Dockrill is undoubtedly the most accomplished female rider in the world. but a good deal of her success is. beyond question, due to the sort of artificial bustle which is worked up in her behalf. For instance, she gets altogether the greatest amount of applause for her easiest act. After

going through hoops, over banners, and bounding across hurdles, all of which feats are more or less difficult, and none of which arouse any unusual amount of enthusiasm,

she rides wildly around the ring at great speed, but does nothing excepting pose upon the back of her broad-hipped horse. The animal is forced to his highest gait, and the people in the ring follow him around in a circle yelling at the tops of their voices every time the equestrienne strikes a new attitude, until the audience is finally humbugged into believing that something great is going on before them. The consequence is, that when Madame Dockrill finally drops upon the ground she receives a tremendous round of applause, which is given her for doing probably the first thing she ever learned how to perform in a circus. She subsequently appears again just before the end of the entertainment in what is called on the programme the riding, driving and controlling of six spirited and wildly running horses. We did not enjoy this part of the entertainment, and we don't believe any one else did. In the first place, her horses were not particularly spirited, and did not run at all wildly. In the second place it is not a pleasurable spectacle to any but the grossest vision when a woman deliberately undertakes to spread herself over the backs of six horses. The feat is no doubt a difficult one, but it is also more or less disgusting.

When Madame Dockrill is performing this act in one of the rings, Mr. Frank Melville, gotten up in a slender imitation of John McCullough as the Gladiator, is similarly engaged in another inclosure (sic). Comparison between the two riders results in favorable conclusions so far as the female is concerned. Mr. Melville is a young man who apparently imagines that he is the greatest rider that the world has ever seen. He is not. The one difficult feat which he does well consists of riding a trotting horse barebacked over hurdles and banners in the way customary to equestrians who manage to retain their equilibrium upon ordinarily galloping animals. Mr. Melville does a great deal of dancing and posturing during the evening which is not particularly attractive, and only serves to fill a little time. We should advise the management of this show to cut him

Roman wrestler. Dockrill is, of PTBARNUMS GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH SO GREAT LONDON GIRGUS course, the chief feature of the traveling this season only the traveling the traveling this season only the traveling the traveling this season only the traveling this season only the traveling this season only the traveling the tra

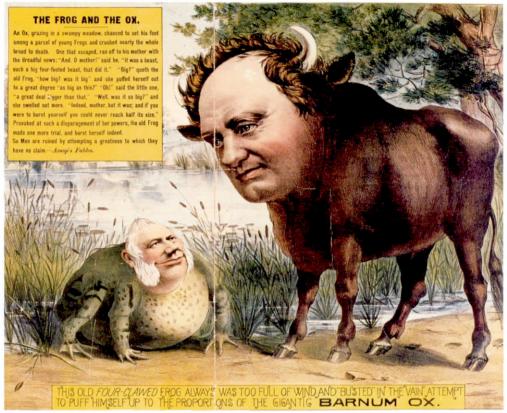


Tom Thumb and his wife were heavily advertised by Barnum and London in 1881. Thumb appeared on at least three different posters that year. They made themselves available for visiting in the menagerie before the big show, and the General was usually good for a newspaper interview. Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

down to one act, and that the one where the trotting horse is employed.

Mme. Cordona, who is the new female rider, is better than any we have ever seen, excepting the Dockrill. She is graceful and not uncomely, and she rides with a good deal of confidence and dash. The Greco-Roman wrestling match between Bibby and Prof. Hoefler is a rattling set-to, which ends precisely at the time when the corresponding entertainments in the other two rings come to a close. Bibby throws his antagonist fairly upon his back in about five minutes after the two men grapple. Of course, the wrestling is in serious earnest. It is only a coincidence that two men so well matched as these should conclude their bout strictly on time. Men less evenly pitted against each other have been known to wrestle in the Greco-Roman fashion for hours before either counted a fall. But that is neither here nor there. This wrestling match, which occurs regularly every afternoon and evening, is simply a magnificent display of skill and strength.

There is a woman who swings chairs in her teeth; a man who shows that his bones are as flexible as india (sic) rubber; an elephant which stands upon its head in an undignified way, and a menagerie that is numerously populated. The other members of the organization we saw but little of. The only way to get at the full extent of this entertainment is to go at least three times in succession, and watch only one ring at once. There was a long line of clowns stretched through Monday evening and they were the best we ever saw, probably for the reason that we could not hear a solitary word they said. One fellow in the lot was genuinely



Personal attacks on rival showmen were common in the 1880s. This lithograph portrays one of Aesop's fables about a frog who tried to blow himself up to the size of an ox, and burst. The lesson: "So Men are ruined by attempting a greatness to which they have no claim." This poster, from the 1882 Strobridge sample book at the Cincinnati Art Museum was inexplicitly trimmed with the left side showing Barnum, Bailey and Hutchinson, and the top and bottom text removed. Cincinnati Art Museum Collection.

funny. He dressed himself as one of the ring hands, and confined himself during the evening to getting into the way of the others when they were spreading and taking up the carpets. He was a veritable busy-body, always about to do something to help the others, and never succeeding in accomplishing anything excepting to get under the feet of his companions. About half the audience thought he was a genuine ring hand. This is the first new thing in clowns that has been introduced since circuses were first invented.

This show, taken all in all, is too big to be fully enjoyed. A great deal of material that would be of value by itself is utterly swamped in the vast quantity of stuff presented. That the gigantic order of entertainment pays, however, is clearly shown by the tremendous number of people drawn to the opening performance at the Madison Square Garden. There were at least twelve thousand men and women present on Monday night, and they seemed to be well entertained. There is one thing about this show: it will end all ordinary circus business wherever it goes.

Over the River. Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth with Three Rings, Brooklyn (New York) Eagle, 3 April 1881, p. 5.

New York, April 2. Undoubtedly the leading event in the amusement world this week has been the opening of Bar-

num's grandest show on earth, at the Madison Square Garden. The leading showman of our time is really warranted in calling his last enterprise the greatest show on earth, for it reduced all previous circuses to the dimensions of a sideshow. . . Oh, for three pairs of eyes, was the universal wish throughout the audience. "Next time I visit this show I shall get drunk before hand,' said a gentleman. "And why," asked his companion. "Well, I shall then be able to take in two rings at least, I shall see double." Too much circus had already turned the poor fellow's brain. There is such a multiplicity of attractions connected with this show that it is difficult to select its best features. Most of the acts are new and novel, and there is not a bad performer in the entire company. . . .

Barnum was finally well enough to attend the circus

on 11 April. In a moment of uncharacteristic candor, he acknowledged that his young partners framed the entire undertaking.

Mr. Barnum at His Own Show, New York (New York) Times, 12 April 1881, p. 8.

After the performance by the trained elephants at Barnum's "greatest show on earth," last evening, there were loud calls for Mr. Barnum, and the veteran showman stepped into the arena. His appearance was the signal for a round of cheers, for it was his first visit to his new mammoth entertainment. He said that he had just returned from Florida refreshed and rejuvenated, and fully restored to health. The great show, he said, had been put together entirely by young American managers, who he hoped would keep the name of Barnum before the public long after he was laid in the silent tomb. The female kangaroo honored the occasion by producing a youngster, and she seemed to enjoy the distinction of carrying about in her comfortable pouch the first kangaroo ever born on Manhattan Island. None of the performers was either gnawed by tigers or stepped on by elephants, but Senor Don Gerinimo Bell, "the wild Brazilian hurricane hurdle-rider," turned a graceful backward somersault, landing on the back of his head. The Garden was full, as usual, and everybody went away happy, except one man with a stiff neck, who strained his windpipe trying to look at the three rings at once.

The birth of the kangaroo provided a little extra publicity.

A Kangaroo Born, New Haven (Connecticut) Evening Register, 13 April 1881, p. 3.

New York, April 13.—Just after Mr. Barnum had retired from the ring in the Madison Square Garden on Monday

evening, where he had announced to an applauding audience his return from Florida in robust health, Mr. J. A. Bailey came running in from the menagerie to see him. A few words were spoken, then Mr. Barnum hurried out after Mr. Bailey. Those who were privileged to follow the two showmen soon found themselves in front of the kangaroo cage. Inside of the cage a pair of animals balanced themselves on their hind legs and stout tails as upon three-legged stools, and gazed out upon the gathering group with mild eyed speculation. Apparently there was no other occupant.

"When was it born, John?" asked Mr. Barnum of the keeper.

"I don't know," said John. "I discovered it only about five years [minutes] ago."

While the keeper was speaking, the concealed mouth of the pouch, midway between the fore and the hind legs of the mother, opened and a clear cut, sharp-featured kangaroo face appeared. The slim neck was turned toward the visitors, and two little black speculative eyes began a study of the situation. This was the only part of itself that ventured to show. From the top of its head to its nostrils was about two inches. The mother's head was about six inches long.

When the throng which had crowded the amphitheatre pressed through the menagerie on its way to the street the news was spread from one to another, and the happy parents held a numerously attended levee, but the infant, frightened by the noise and number, insisted for the most part on keeping its chamber. Mr. Bailey says that this is the only kangaroo ever born in this country, except one in Cincinnati, the mother of which had just been brought from Australia. That one lived only a few days, but the parents of this one are both tame, and acclimated, and Mr. Bailey believes they will raise it. . . .

As the excellent reviews attest, the show was a smashing success, even if there was too much of it. The three week Madison Square Garden engagement was satisfactory, if not big. The best day of the run brought in \$8862 [\$185,415], which wasn't among the top twenty days of the season. Bangor and Portland, Maine; Worcester and Springfield, Massachusetts; and St. Joseph, Missouri generated more revenue than New York's best day.

The Gotham stand lasted until 16 April, after which the circus made its under-canvas debut in Washington on 18 April. That's where the trouble with Adam Forepaugh started.

Forepaugh already had a prickly relationship with Barnum as evidenced by his response to Barnum's New York Sun interview the previous September. He also slugged it out with Cooper and Bailey that year in Cleveland where Forepaugh appeared on 5-6 August, and the London on 3 September. The press war had the usual personal attacks on the other's character. As was the fashion of the day, both troupes announced monetary challenges on such issues as who had better parade wagons; more capital invested, more riders, and so on. The London even dispatched a band and a few wagons to Cleveland for a miniparade on 30 July. When Forepaugh became aware of the little procession, he sent two of his own parade vehicles to fall in behind the London's wagons. He also covered the town with his posters. That was apparently a good idea, because, in spite of the opposition, Forepaugh turned away so many people the first day in Cleveland that a 10:00~a. m. performance was added on the second day. 32

The long knives really came out in 1881 as the Forepaugh and Barnum shows both played the same city thirty-eight times. They banged heads in metropolitan areas such as Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Chicago, and St. Louis as well as small towns such as Atlantic, Marshalltown, and Council Bluffs, Iowa. In every instance Forepaugh exhibited first. Although the two companies never day and dated, Forepaugh was ahead of Barnum by as little as one day in Philadelphia, and as many as 104 days in Bloomington, Illinois. It was really intense in April as the Barnum show followed Forepaugh into Washington, Baltimore and Philadelphia, all big money dates, only twelve, twenty and one day apart, respectively, after Forepaugh left. Forepaugh beat Barnum into five towns on the latter's July route; seven in August; a staggering eighteen in September; and six in October. The average time between Forepaugh's appearance and Barnum's was 61 days, exactly two months.

Bowser's diary gave the first inkling of trouble on 24 March, shortly before Barnum's New York opening: "Forepaugh or some one [above the word "some" was written "Coup" meaning he was also a suspect] out with poster that P.T.B. & Co. have sold so much of their stock that have not 4 allied shows in fact not more than one." This comment referred to the 5 November and 16 December auctions of excess, obsolete and redundant equipment from the Philadelphia and Bridgeport winter quarters.

Forepaugh played Washington on 4-5 April while the Barnum show followed on 18-19 April. Charles H. Day, who had a gift for this sort of thing, wrote a rat bill accusing Barnum and London of embellishing the size of its parade: It was "a Gross Exaggeration! Without a Single World of Truth." The show had 14 elephants, not 20; 23 cages, not 100; and 25 mounted people in uniform, not hundreds.

An inventory of the 26 March New York evening parade followed. Even if it wasn't as astounding as Barnum's press agents claimed, it was still impressive: Dog Cart; band wagon; a pair of mounted trumpeters; a Spanish Drag; a tally-ho coach; a baggage tableau; eleven mounted riders; a cage; a tableau wagon; two cages; a steam organ, "no music;" ten led horses; two Roman chariots, one pulled by three elephants, the other by one; baggage tableau, bag pipes, "same as last season," drawn by four camels and two horses; cage; two dromedaries; a small racing chariot drawn by four camels; four cages; a baggage tableau with a drum corps atop pulled by three camels and two horses; band wagon; a dozen mounted riders; two cages; the chime wagon; two quagas and vehicle; two elks; two small pony chariots; small carriage; another small chariot; two cages; baggage tableau with "Injuns;" five cages; two elephants; baggage tableau, "4 elephants and several Ethiopians;" baggage tableau, four elephants; small chariot; three cages; two tableaus; a cage; steam calliope; yet another cage; and five mounted marshals.

Not surprisingly Day declared that Forepaugh's parade was much better. The diatribe concluded with another shot at Barnum and London: "The 4-Paw show is not an experiment-it is a fixed fact, neither is it an imaginary combination. Moreover, it is the largest show in the world! and exposes Fraud! Falsehood! and Downright Deceit!."33 The allusion to the experiment referred to Barnum London's advertising that their alliance was an experiment that may not be continued.

While Forepaugh distributed his her-

ald in Washington and its environs at the end of March, Bailey pulled the same trick he had the year before by sending the steam organ, calliope and bell wagon to the Capital "to buck against the Forepaugh Show." There was a hint of intrigue associated with this episode: "While in Washington two of the horses took sick on the street and died; there was something very mysterious about it." 34

Barnum hit back through the newspapers. The Greatest Show on Earth also ran a paid ad in the *Post* that masqueraded as a public letter to his advance staff, in which the great showman dismissed his competitor with breathtaking humility.

Hon. P. T. Barnum to His Agents, Washington (District of Columbia) Post, 31 March 1881, p. 4. Green Cove Springs, Florida, March 26, 1881. Agents Barnum-London Consolidation, Washington: Your telegram that an envious and ordinary showman and his agents were circulating nauseating bills against our Exhibition just received. I can well understand, with nearly half a century's experience to enlighten me, your disposition to repel any malicious and libelous attack on me personally, or upon our great Exhibition. But I tell you firmly and kindly that you must not condescend to notice the falsehoods and slanders of envious showmen who are endeavoring to do a business on my reputation and to bring themselves into prominence through our replies to their calumnies. If their Exhibitions are not sufficiently meritorious to obtain favor in a fair and honorable manner, the fault is not mine nor yours.

"You cannot handle pitch without being defiled." Much less can I afford to stoop from my exalted position as the leading manager of this continent, to say the least, to dis-



This impressive image depicts James S. Robinson leading the 1881 Barnum and London band. On the right is a rarity, a listing of all the band members, Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

pute with an opponent who knows any notice I take of him will serve as a recommendation and indorsement (sic). . . .

We can have no real opposition. Is not our enormous consolidation the happy union of the four undisputed best shows on earth? . . .

I pledge my personal honor and my managerial reputation of nearly fifty years, that never before within the memory of man, nor the pages of history, and probably not since the creation of the world, has there been a combination of exhibitions of such a nature as my "Greatest Show on Earth" in conjunction with the great London shows, that could bear any comparison with ours, either in regard to its unparalleled extent, its wonderful talent, its numerous extraordinary performances, its immense collection of rare living animals and human phenomena; its more than royal gold, silver and enameled equipages, its gorgeous and exceedingly brilliant tout ensemble—the almost incredible amount of money invested in its outfit, and the four thousand five hundred dollars required each day to pay its ordinary expense. It is decidedly the crowning triumph of my managerial life, and one which many judicious persons believe I can never afford to repeat. Yours truly, P. T. Bar-

The 2 April Washington Post ran side by side advertisements for the rival extravaganzas in which the Barnum camp responded to Forepaugh's charge that they sold

much of their equipment: "The Undisputed Prince on the Way. . . . Those Auction Sales—Good-bye 'Old Trash.' Everything Fresh and New as the Fragrant Breath of Spring Time." Forepaugh's taunts took a new direction when he informed the public that his circus had always been under his management, and he was "never obliged to 'combine' or change ownership," as Barnum had. He then reiterated the familiar claim that his circus represented a larger investment, more novelties, more and better performers, and more rare animals. Furthermore he had "more of everything in the world of show than any and all other exhibitions, single or combined and now or in the past."

To modern sensibilities Forepaugh's claims that the Barnum show had sold its equipment and that Barnum had changed partners seems ridiculous, carrying little or no weight. It must be remembered that we have to take the 1880s, all the past in fact, on its own terms. What appears monumentally irrelevant to us obviously resonated with the public in 1881. Forepaugh would not have chosen this tactic if he didn't think he could influence public opinion by doing so.

Years later, Forepaugh's former agent Hugh Coyle remembered the antics of 1881. Writing in *Billboard* he recalled that eventful season: "In 1881 there was a tri-cornered battle of real events in the press agency field. Nothing before or since has ever compared with it, in either skill, intelligence or 'real' newspaper work. Of the aggressive opposition character, without fake or recrimination and all friendly. . . . There was a continuous clash in all the large cities for nearly forty weeks by these three institutions [Barnum, Forepaugh and Coup] two of them merely circuses and menageries, the other a great show, Camp's [inexplicitly, he called Coup by this name] Hippodrome. . . . "35

The under-canvas season began in the nation's capital on 18 April. The show train's arrival was cause for excitement and wonder.

Startling Midnight Scene, Washington (District of Columbia) Post, 18 April 1881, p. 4.

A large crowd of men, women and children assembled last night about the freight depot of the Baltimore and Potomac railway, on Maryland avenue, to witness the arrival of Barnum's great show and the debarkment (sic) of the animals. The crowd numbered fully 2000, and the great attractions, especially the Chinese giant, were greeted with cheers as they stepped upon Washington soil. . . .

It took until long after midnight to unload the two trains. The entire outfit was conveyed to the show grounds, corner Ninth and S streets. Ninth street was for hours lined with spectators to enjoy the free show. Without exception, they expressed astonishment at the magnitude of the collection. The big horse slowly walked up Ninth street, and seemed twice as tall as the horses attached to the street-cars. . . .

A correspondent for a Dallas paper attended the show in Washington, sending back a rather odd report in which he alleged Chang the Chinese giant told him, in a stereotypical Chinese laundry accent, that he didn't like show business, and that Tom Thumb was a drunk who was mean to his wife. He also expressed the opinion, still widely held in 1881, that success in the show business was not a worthy aspiration.

Washington Letter, Dallas (Texas) Weekly Herald, 28 April 1881, p. 3.

. . . It is estimated that twenty-five thousand people saw the performances vesterday. To-day [19 April], there are three performances to accommodate the people. Last night at 7 o'clock there was not standing room in the grand tent. Many of the performers are in the hotel where we stay, and I have interviewed several of the "lady riders" and trapeze performers. They tell me there are twenty-five women connected with the show, all married but two. The husbands are also in the business, and they travel together. One of the two single ladies is Barnum's niece, and was trained at Astley's, England, for the "ring." She rides in full riding costume and looks like a lady. The big Chinese giant says he "don't likee show business. Too muche travel all aroundto muche stay up latee alle night." Little old Tom Thumb looks dissipated and coarse, and is very cross to his tiny wife, who is crying her poor eyes out over his drunkenness and his crossness. But the greatest curiosity is Barnum himself. A man isn't worth much without ambition, so I suppose even ambition to be the greatest showman on earth is better than none at all, but I can't imagine how a man can be pleased with such fame. Certainly Barnum understands his business well, especially the advertising part, and is a living proof of the efficiency of printer's ink.

The company did solid business in Washington, almost \$16,000 [\$334,760] for the two days. A short haul to Baltimore followed where the circus also appeared for two days.

Forepaugh's attacks continued. On 6 April, the day his circus opened in Baltimore, he took a two column ad in the *Baltimore Sun* admonishing the Barnum circus for exaggerating its size and features. How could that show, the incredulous Forepaugh inquired, claim to have the biggest exhibition in the world if so much of it was auctioned off in November and December 1880? Furthermore, Barnum's assertion that the new enterprise was the uniting of four circuses was a lie. "How can the broken and shattered remaining fragments of these alleged 'two shows' now furnish material enough for 'four great shows?""

The extent of Barnum's involvement was questioned; the performance was knocked; the advertised \$4500 daily nut was inflated; and on and on. After concluding that Barnum and London was a "fifth rate exhibition," the remainder of the ad glowingly catalogued the wonders of the Forepaugh show, and there were a lot of them. In all, it was a severely critical evaluation of the Greatest Show on Earth. This notice also had Charles Day stamped all over it. ³⁶

Bowser's entry for 9 April suggested that Forepaugh was feeling the heat from the Barnum show's advertising department: "Meet Chas. McLean. He says Forepaugh telegraphed yesterday to say quits on show warfare." McLean was the Barnum and London canvas boss.

Forepaugh's assaults did not hurt Barnum as the second day in Baltimore was the biggest of the season to that point, \$9586 [\$200,563]. Harrisburg and Lancaster, Pennsylvania finished the week. It was a good one, bringing in

\$43,720 [\$914,732], higher than any week in New York. Philadelphia was up next as was more fun with Forepaugh.

This electric light, first displayed on Cooper and Bailey in 1879, was used on the combined shows in 1881. Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

April 1881 was a great month for circuses in Philadelphia. W. C. Coup exhibited there from 6 to 9 April; Forepaugh from 11 to 23 April; and Barnum from 25 to 30 April, almost an entire month of circuses. This was the closest Forepaugh and Bar-

num came to day and dating, which probably accounted for the intense vituperation from both sides. Barnum's advance crew posted bills stating that at the auctions held in November and December 1880, Forepaugh had purchased stuffed snakes and monkeys, blind horses, worn out harness and cages, old wax figures, worn out wardrobe, rotten canvas, old, worn-out wagons, and all "the broken poles and fuzzy ropes." In a strange twist the Barnum's people enumerated what their circus did *not* have: "Any Automatic Museum Stuff, Any So-Called Flying Machines, Any Death-inviting Hot Air Balloons, Any Stuffed Wild Beasts or any work for the taxidermist at all."

Back and forth it went. Forepaugh announced he was "glad to get an official acknowledgement that Barnum's attractions were stuffed monkeys and worthless animals." When Forepaugh paraded on 11 April, three or four wagons followed with placards imploring the public to "Wait for Barnum." Barnum issued a public letter in which he said he would not answer any untruthful statement from any "misrepresenting showman," but he did want to state a few facts. He spent the rest of the letter defending Barnum and London, and denying Forepaugh's claims. A New Haven newspaper had an astute comment on the affair: "All this warfare is very enjoyable to the public, and only the agents boil over with rage." ³⁷

The day his circus opened in Philadelphia, Barnum gave a typically magnificent interview promoting his company. No one did it better; the following is a masterpiece. He graciously commended the Forepaugh show now that it had left town, all the while damning it with faint praise, established that he was actively involved in his circus, and got in a little free publicity to boot.

Barnum's Show, The Philadelphia (Pennsylvania) Inquirer, 25 April 1881, p. 3.

. . . Mr. Barnum was at the Continental yesterday, and to

a representative of this paper, who said to him, "I have to thank you for many a pleasant hour," replied, as he honored his visitor with a cordial clasp of the hand, "People often say to me, 'Why, my father and mother used to take

me to your exhibitions,' and I say to them, 'Well, and you'll bring your children, won't you?' and they always tell me certainly they will, so there are three generations of my countrymen and my countrywomen that I hope are my friends.

"In that connection," he continued, "I should like people to understand that I am on friendly terms with my brother showmen. I am not in favor of mud throwing. Such disputes as there are have

grown out of some little rivalry between our respective press agents. I was at Mr. Forepaugh's show myself the other night, and it's a very good one. He and I are personally on excellent terms. He did the honors gracefully, and I complimented him on his cages, which are not as numerous as ours, it is true, but are very showy with the gilt-carved figures which most of them have on each corner.

"It is a mistake," Mr. Barnum went on, "to suppose that 'The Greatest Show on Earth' sets itself up to rival any other. There is no competition and, for my own part, if the agents of other's shows criticized mine I should not reply. Suppose some small tavern up Second street or out Market street should advertise itself as the largest and nicest hotel in the city, would the proprietors of the Continental rush into print with, 'That is not so. Our own hotel is the best and the biggest."

The reporter respectfully reminding Mr. Barnum that there were circumstances under which he saw fit to reply pretty sharply to criticism, he said with a smile; "Oh, yes; I have just entered suit against a newspaper in this city for libel, claiming \$100,000 damages for saying that I merely hired my name to a company and did not own a dollar's worth of my own show. I shall file an affidavit to-morrow, in which I state that no partner is more deeply interested, financially, than I am, and that my partners and myself are bound by contract to keep the show going until 1899, and provision is made by my last will and testament for its being continued by my heirs after I am gone."

"Your object, then, in this suit is to establish a fact?"

"Precisely; to establish the fact that I am part owner of the property, and have as much at stake as any one of my partners. I hear there is not much money in that quarter, but I want the stupid slander about my position to be settled at once and finally in court. It has been kept up now for three years, and it is time it was stopped. . . ."

Speaking of the character of the company Mr. Barnum remarked that it included eighteen or twenty double-somer-

sault men; that there were twenty-four chariots, and that half the cages were sometimes left behind on procession - days. In Baltimore, he said, he saw the procession from an elevated position near the monument whence he could see far along the line; that the head was away beyond view long ere the rear came into sight, and that he himself had been surprised that so much gorgeousness and glitter and cash could be crowded into the line. It was such a sight, he remarked, as he had never before seen, and windows in New York, on the streets through which it was to pass, were sold at high prices.

The 25th of April was a good day for Philadelphia lawyers. On that date Barnum sued the *Philadelphia Daily Sun* for stating he had no connection with or investment in his show, and Forepaugh filed suit against Barnum and London for alleging he purchased worn out and obsolete equipment from them in late 1880.

Circuses, New York Clipper, 30 April 1881, p. 98.

P. T. Barnum, in a suit for \$100,000 damages brought against The Philadelphia Daily Sun for alleged libel, makes the following curious statement, which will be interesting reading to people connected with the circus profession, and also to the public at large:

Philadelphia, April 25, 1881. I, Phineas T. Barnum of Bridgeport, Connecticut, solemnly swear that I have invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in the traveling show business; that no person owns a larger share than myself in the new show-combination known as "P. T. Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth, The Great London Circus, Sanger's Royal British Menagerie, and The International Allied Shows." I further solemnly swear that no traveling show in the world has nearly so much money invested in it, or is under nearly such large daily expenses as this great combination of exhibitions. My sole and only partners are Mr. James A. Bailey and Mr. J. L. Hutchinson. They both possess liberal managerial ideas, tact, energy, experience and remarkable capacity for conducting such a large and complicated enterprise. Their desire, like my own, is to provide for public recreation and instruction the largest, purest and best combination of morally refined and rare novelties in the world, always securing only the very best talent in each and every department, and from year to year increasing and improving the attractions.

Our contract of co-partnership extends to 1899, with provisions for the continuance of the show for generation to comes, and I have set aside in my last will and testament a large, special cash capital for that purpose, to be used by my successors, heirs and executors whenever deemed necessary.

By mutual agreement with my partners, I continually keep two competent special agents with the show invested with full power to act with and for me as my representatives.

I have prosecuted the editor and proprietor of The Philadelphia Sun for one hundred thousand dollars damages for publishing the stale slander that I hire out my name and am not a principal owner in this marvelous combination.

I propose to sue for heavy damages any and every person of responsibility who repeats that or any other false, malicious and injurious statement in regard to me or my last best and greatest of all traveling shows.

I bear no ill-will towards any person living. The world is wide enough for all who wish to do right. I recognize no competition, for there really is none in my line. I respect every manager of healthful recreations and innocent, instructive amusements; but justice to the public as well as to myself demands that all malicious falsehoods concerning me and my business shall henceforth be suppressed.

Sworn and subscribed before me this 25th day of April A. D. 1881 Phineas T. Barnum. (Seal) Albert H. Ladner, Magistrate Central Station.

Circuses, New York Clipper, 7 May 1881, p. 114.

In a civil suit to recover damages, begun April 25 in the Court of Common Pleas, No. 3, Philadelphia, Pa., by Adam Forepaugh against P. T. Barnum, J. A. Bailey, and J. L. Hutchinson, upon the following affidavit of Mr. Forepaugh, Judge Finletter granted a capias for the arrest of the defendants, and fixed the bail at \$5000 each.

Adam Forepaugh, being duly sworn, says he has been the owner of a circus and menagerie for over fifteen years, and has traveled for the purpose of exhibition during said time all through the United States and Canada. . . .

That the defendants, P. T. Barnum, J. A. Bailey and J. L. Hutchinson, have entered into a conspiracy to injure and destroy the good name and to hinder and prevent the business of this deponent.

That defendants have by handbills and public advertisements given notice to the public that this deponent has purchased by himself or through his agents "the stuffed monkeys, the old stuffed snakes, the old blind horses, the wornout harness, the dilapidated cages, the old wax figures, the worn-out wardrobe, the old rotten canvas, the used up circus traps, the old worn-out wagons, the old fashioned cars and old, dilapidated vans sold by defendant," with the intention by such false, malicious and libelous circulation of inducing the public not to visit the exhibition of this deponent, and thereby cause him great loss and damage.

That said defendants have further advertised to the public that the deponent has been exposed as a fraud and laid bare as a swindler, and thereby seek to put discredit upon and injure the good name of deponent.

That defendants further conspiring to injure the deponent caused millions of circulars to be printed and distributed in the cities of Washington and Baltimore while deponent was exhibiting there, stating that the severe weather, together with the presence of a circus company, where hundreds have sat under a chilly canvas, has brought sickness into many households, that pneumonia has spread so rapidly for the past three days as to become almost an epidemic, and that nothing like it was ever known in Washington, and that the fatality for the next forty-eight hours will be frightful—that the circulars were distributed over the entire city in houses, railway cars, and every place where they would likely be read, for the purpose of preventing the public through fear from visiting the exhibition of the deponent.

That defendants have advertised that artists engaged by deponent at great expense do not appear as represented by deponent, and have by libelous advertisements as to them sought to ridicule and destroy the well-earned reputation of such artists, and thereby injure the reputation and exhibi-

tion of this deponent.

That since deponent has started on the road for the traveling season defendants have by all manner of device conspired to injure and break up his exhibition, employing agents to follow him and go in advance of his exhibition,

distributing false, malicious and libelous handbills defaming the exhibition of deponent which agents have followed his procession on the streets and have stood in front of his exhibition, distributing thousand of said handbills to the public and flooding the entire city with them.

That the deponent further avers that said allegations as made by defendants are false and untrue, and utterly without foundation, and that he has been damaged thereby to the extent of over \$50,000. Sworn and subscribed to, etc., Adam Forepaugh.

In spite of Barnum's admonishment to his attaches to ignore Forepaugh's "nauseating bills," the show distributed a herald in direct response to Forepaugh's derogatory handbills in Washington and Baltimore. Circulated in Philadelphia just before Forepaugh's stand began on 11 April, the Barnum and London flyer indicted the Philadelphian for exaggerating his features, the same crime of which Forepaugh accused Barnum.

Hard to believe, but the Barnum dodger was more embellished and in purpler prose than Forepaugh's original broadside. It read in part: "Just Retribution! The elements angry! And the Populace Undeceived! O, Shame! Where is thy blush? 4-Paw's Bad Day! Who should cry aloud, 'My sins are greater than I can bear?' A fraud exposed. A Swindle laid Bare. Let the galled Jade wince. Mark well and read the truth!" It went on to say that Forepaugh had "only an ordinary circus parade." Not only that, but in Washington the parade didn't include the \$10,000 Beauty, "nor even one of her attendants, if she has any." An inventory of the 5 April parade in Baltimore was enumerated. The last item on the list read: "1 Calliope-out of order." Forepaugh's procession no more compared with Barnum's "than pale Moonshine to brilliant Sunlight."

The obverse was more of the same. "The most villainous slanders ever conceived in the brain of designing man," cried the Barnum bill writer, "have been widely circulated for months in advance on the route of the Stupendous Barnum and London Consolidation!"

It wasn't just Forepaugh's parade that was overstated; so was the performance. He didn't display twenty elephants as advertised, did not have a living hippopotamus, not "even the tail of one;" and did not exhibit two woolly elephants.

Particular scorn was heaped on human cannonball George Loyal and high wire walker Ellen Zuila, two of the company's biggest attractions. Loyal's "awful cannon is made of wood, and the kind of powder used to eject him from a harmless Wooden Gun is simply rubber springs." That was mean. It was like a magician disclosing how an illusion was done to the public. Zuila, who was advertised to cross the wire while holding her infant child, "has no-

baby, and the authorities would not permit her to carry it, if she had. Her wire is not one hundred feet above the ground, for the reason that the Tents are not that high. . . ."³⁸ No wonder Forepaugh sued Barnum and London.



The French Troupe Davene's acrobatic and gymnastic routines were well illustrated in this lithogtaph. The woman in the upper left, identified as Madame Olga, was Elizabeth Powers, sister of Davene's wife. She was killed in May after hitting the net at the wrong angle after being catapulted into it during the concert. Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

Circus opposition wars in the public press at least had the merit of getting both shows' names before the public. Arguments in the trade press are more difficult to understand since anything aimed exclusively at the field show community would have no impact on either the attacker or the attacked. Nevertheless, here we have the Barnum show disparaging Forepaugh's suit against them.

Advertisement, New York Clipper, 30 April 1881, p. 99. A Showman Seeking Notoriety. Philadelphia, April 15, 1881.

To the Editor of the Clipper—Sir: You will doubtless be asked to publish (as some Philadelphia papers have been coaxed to do) a puffy, long-winded affidavit made by a showman whose employees commenced throwing mud several months ago; but, perhaps, having gotten the worst of it, he sues us, and makes us give bail for appearance; at court in the enormous sum of five thousand dollars each! We don't propose to aid this man in his strife for notoriety by even using his name. Some "ADVERTISING DODGES"

are transparent to the simplest observer. We only hope that this obscure showman's great-grandchildren will live long enough to see this suit (!) tried. Poor old Methuselah will be nowhere!

Barnum, Bailey & Hutchinson, Sole Owners of the Great Barnum-London Show Combination.

An enterprising reporter in Philadelphia wrote a short piece on the show's cook house. This was the archetypical circus human interest story and a variation of the following was written hundreds of other times.

Feeding the Circus Folks, New Haven (Connecticut) Sunday Union, 15 May 1881, p. 6.

Lithograph depicting the Davenes other act. Note that while Madame Olga's image appears at the bottom left, she is not identified. The Davenes were one of only a few acts that did double duty. Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

An inquisitive reporter who penetrated into the hidden mysteries of the great circuses writes as follows in the Philadelphia Record:

There is one section of the circus ground where even the production of a fifty-cent ticket fails to give the holder an "open sesame." Just back off the main tent, but near enough to the dressing room for the odors of the kitchen to be wafted to the noses of the performers is the canteen of the vast establishment. There in three tents 350 people regularly take their meals, and when, as is often the case, the performers prefer to remain on the spot between performances rather than go to their boarding houses, over four hundred mouths have to be provided for.

The quantity of provisions consumed by the circus force daily is large enough to make the tradesmen who are supplying the demand wish that the institution would permanently settle in the city. Yesterday afternoon 100 pounds of beefsteak, mutton and pork chops and ham were cooked for supper. Of the forty gallons of milk received in the morning not a drop was left, and the last of 400 loaves had disappeared when the tables were deserted. For breakfast and supper 60 gallons of tea and coffee are made, 50 pounds of coffee and 10 pounds of tea being used at each meal. Thir-

ty-five pounds of butter, 100 pounds of sugar, 60 dozen eggs and 10 bushels of potatoes go every day to satisfy the appetites of the hungry folk, and at dinner they go through eight courses with a vim. Four cooks prepare the food and thirty waiters attend the tables. The cooking tents are furnished with a couple of immense ranges on which sixteen

frying pans or sauce pans can be put into use at one time. Outside, strung to cross beams, are six big kettles, which are kept at boiling pitch all day long, a cord of wood per day being the quota consumed. Two kettles to be received from New York will have a capacity for boiling 125 pounds of beef and 409 heads of cabbage each at once. The canteen has an advance agent, Mr. Fred Sutherland, who travels two days in advance of the show and buys up the grub which will be required by the small army when it pitches its tent.

The 11 June New York Dramatic News announced that "the difficulties between Forepaugh and Barnum have been amicably adjusted." Despite the truce the ill feeling between the two shows continued. Whether in spite of or because of the opposition from Forepaugh, the Philadelphia date was a big winner for Barnum and London. The \$47,718 [\$998,380] of revenue made

the week the second best of the entire season.

In May the fighting with Forepaugh dropped off as the Barnum show toured Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. Forepaugh headed west that month, spending most of it in Indiana and Illinois.

The accident and mortality rate in nineteenth century America was appalling by today's standards. Virtually all circus route books from the period were catalogues of carnage. It was a different era, a time when violence or death had an immediacy found only in small pockets of society today. Safety regulations were close to non-existent and employers incurred no liability from work-related deaths. Further, interpersonal conflicts were more often resolved by violence than now. Elizabeth Davene's death on 13 May was the most tragic of the season. The following account is also an excellent description of the catapult act that caused her demise.

Death on the Catapult, Cleveland (Ohio) Leader, 28 May 1881, n. p. n. From the Philadelphia Times, n. d.

Lizzie Davene, who three weeks ago was thrilling thousands of spectators at Barnum's show in this city by her daring flying trapeze acts and still more daring propulsion from an infernal machine, called by circus men a catapult but differing materially form the ancient war engine of that name, was buried in Greenwood Cemetery, New York, yesterday, the victim of her own intrepidity, the unthinking or brutal curiosity of the multitude and the cupidity of money getting managers. The cruel death of this young woman has

caused a sensation in this city, where a terrible accident to her pretty little niece, Lucy, occurred a year ago.

Readers of the Times remember the shocking details of Lucy Davene's terrible fall from a flying trapeze above the London ring, when the great London-Forepaugh combination was performing down at Broad and Dickinson streets, in the spring of 1880; how, as she started to make a swinging somersault, her head struck the iron pedestal on which her feet had stood an instant before; how the blow knocked her insensible; how she relaxed her hold on the trapeze bar and fell, with a dull thud, to the ground, twenty feet below; how one of the Laurences picked her up and ran with her, all limp and broken, out into the dressing tent, out of the sight of the horrified spectators; how her mother, who was hanging head downward on a trapeze fifty feet away, holding by his feet her husband, who was to have caught Lucy had she made the leap shrieked: "My God, my child, let me down;" how she got down some way and followed her bleeding child out into the side tent; how the ring master shouted that she was not hurt and the show went on; while the poor little thing, separated only by the thickness of a sheet of canvas from the thousands of spectators, lay on a rude pallet, all soiled and disheveled, unconscious, and vomiting blood, while a score of circus men and women stood around her weeping or cursing and damning the practice which would subject a woman to such an accident. Strong hands bore the pallet on which Lucy lay to her boarding-house near by. She was unconscious for hours; she did not speak for days; but she finally recovered and appeared with the rest of the Davene troupe with Barnum's circus, in this city, three weeks ago. Lizzie Davene, who was the sister of Lucy's mother and whose right name was Elizabeth Power, appeared with the rest of the troupe in the trapeze acts, and in ground gymnastics, but her most daring feat was performed at the "concert" after the regular performance. Here she placed herself, lying flat on her back, on a sort of lever, which, by the action of springs worked at a given signal, leaped from the horizontal to a vertical position with such terrific suddenness and force as to send the girl whirling through the air, a distance of about seventyfive feet. She turned three or four somersaults in her flight and landed in a rope netting spread to catch her. The ring master announced the performance in a rigmarole something like this: "Ladies and gentlemen, Miss Lizzie Davene, the world renowned female acrobat, will now perform the wonderful feat of allowing herself to be thrown from the catapult, an engine used by the ancient Romans for throwing projectiles of war. This powerful machine throws the daring young lady a distance of 125 feet, and she makes four distinct revolutions during her flight. This is not a performance which requires a great amount of practice, but it is very dangerous, and there are few persons who have the nerve to undertake it."

This senseless and dangerous feat was performed by Lizzie Davene twice every day, and although the frightful leap and whirl through the air make the spectators shiver and hold their breath, she came down all right until the show reached Wilkes-Barre. There, on Tuesday afternoon, May 3, she failed to time her somersaults exactly right and fell partly upon her head. She straightened out upon the netting and asked for help, saying in a low voice; "I cannot

move hand or foot." She was carried to her dressing room, and a physician found that she was paralyzed in all her limbs. She was removed to the New York Hospital, where she died on Friday. From the time that Lizzie was hurt until she died, Lucy took her place on the catapult.

When ex-Mayor Fox, president of the Society to Protect Children from Cruelty," was informed of the facts vesterday he said: "It is awful, and I believe that the persons who assisted at the killing of that girl are guilty of involuntary manslaughter. Our society cannot act in the case, because the girl was 21 years old, but the attention of the district attorney of Luzerne county should be called to the facts through the public prints. The perpetrators should be convicted of a very grave misdemeanor. The fact that they knew that it was dangerous makes them accessories to the girl's death. There might be some difficulty in deciding who are responsible, but the man who adjusted and sprung the machine is clearly guilty in my opinion. I hope the subject will be agitated until a law is passed forbidding such wicked and disgraceful performances in this commonwealth."

District Attorney Graham was very outspoken in denunciation of such performances. He said they were cruel, unnecessary and demoralizing, and hoped to see a law passed forbidding everything of the kind. "The question of criminal responsibility for the death of Lizzie Davene," said he, "rests upon the point whether those using the catapult were doing a lawful or unlawful act. If the former, her death would be excusable homicide; if the latter, involuntary manslaughter, punishable by imprisonment. Wharton says that those who introduce new and hazardous games without public sanction, involving personal danger to others, are responsible for injuries thus perpetrated. This performance is certainly new and hazardous and not sanctioned by law, but simply tolerated, and certainly ought to be considered an unlawful act, and where death results those who are actors in the performance ought to be held for involuntary manslaughter. It would be difficult, however, to convict before a jury in such a case."

Similar opinions were expressed by several other well-known lawyers, and every layman spoken to said if such was not the law it ought to be.

Circuses, New York Clipper, 28 May 1881, p. 162.

The Committee on Licenses of the Boston City Government has notified P. T. Barnum & Co. that the catapult act cannot be performed in that city on pain of revoking the license for exhibiting.

Circuses, New York Clipper, 11 June 1881, p. 194.

The Davene Troupe.—W. M. Davene desires to state that, after the accident which resulted in Miss Lizzie's death, Miss Lucy did not take her place on the catapult, as was reported. Harry Carey, who is now performing the feat with Barnum's Circus, was the person who succeeded Lizzie. The catapult is not connected with the specialties of the Davene Troupe, and Lizzie for performing the feat was paid an extra and distinct salary.

The Barnum and London route book and the *Clipper* tabulated the casualties.

Route Book, 1 May 1881, Albert Albia struck by a low bridge near Wilkesbarre (sic), seriously hurt.

Route Book, 3 May 1881, Miss Davene received injuries

TRAVELING THIS SEASON ONLY TUTIFIED ACTUAL EXPENSES DAILY \$ 4.500 CM THE MOST GLANTIC AF PARENT PROPERTIES AND ASSOCIATION THE MOST GLANTIC AF PARENT PROPERTIES AND ASSOCIATION AND THOMAS PARENT PROPERTIES AND ASSOCIATION AND THE MOST AND ASSOCIATION AND THE MYRIAD ATTRACTIONS OF

Chang the Chinese Giant was one of the most heavily promoted attractions on the show. Along with Mr. and Mrs. Tom Thumb he appeared in the menagerie, and then participated in the opening walk around. Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

from being thrown from the Catapault, the effects of which caused her death a week later in Brooklyn.

Route Book, 20 May 1881, Pole wagon tips over injuring Wash Smith.

Route Book, 20 June 1881, Frank Gardiner dislocates his arm during afternoon show.

Route Book, 15 July 1881, John Schenk drowned while bathing.

Route Book, 21 July 1881, Man run over and killed by the cars; belonged on the horse tents.

New York Clipper, 30 July 1881, p. 306. Accident.—A man, supposed to be an employee of Barnum's Circus, wearing a belt bearing the inscription: "No. 139 Barnum-London Show Groomsman," was found dead in a terribly mangled condition at Kalamazoo, Mich., on the morning of July 23.

Route Book, Run over a child just after leaving Chicago. New York Clipper, 3 September 1881, p. 383. Death of Spot.—One of the quartet of performing dogs with Barnum's Show baring this name was run over by a chariot and killed in Springfield, O., Aug. 26. The three remaining dogs appeared with crape on their necks in the ring in Richmond, Ind., the following day. Spot was a favorite with all the elephants, and the special pet of Queen. With Queen and Prince, Spot had traveled around the world with Cooper & Bailey's Circus. He was twice in Australia, and had been in all the large cities in South America and Mexico. For six years, whether upon the ocean or speeding across the country on a railway-train, Spot had never failed to sleep at night with his great guardian. The elephant evinced considerable uneasiness at the death of her companion.

Route Book, 6 September 1881, Giant Ox croaked this morning.

Route Book, 7 September 1881, Man killed by the cars near the show grounds.

Route Book, 16 September 1881, Chas. Shoemaker shot this afternoon by a tough of the town; the tough got handled pretty hard.

Route Book, 1 October 1881, Two cars of horses were thrown from the track on their sides, standing the horses on their heads, as they were all tied on the under side of the cars; eight of them were killed, and the balance badly bruised and scratched up.

The flashy, bombastic press agent with a tendency toward exaggeration was a well-known stereotype in late nineteenth century America, at least in newspaper offices. A clever writer for the *Detroit Free Press* parodied the Barnum show's advance man.

A New Departure, The Cedar Rapids (Iowa) Times, 5 May 1881, p. 1.

An advertising agent for one of the great circus combinations has been in Detroit for a week past, and yesterday sat down long enough to answer a few questions. The interview started off as follows:

"How many diamond pins will you wear this summer, and what will be their value?"

"I shall not wear any. Our show has made a new departure in that matter, and nobody except the man in the tick et wagon will be allowed to wear diamonds. I am just going up to the express office to send my seven pins, four rings and sleeve buttons home to my brother."

"How many consolidated shows do you advertise?" "Only thirteen, but we have exactly sixteen. We do not intend to do any blowing this summer, but will practice the

intend to do any blowing this summer, but will practice the modesty dodge. We have twelve clowns, but advertise only ten. We have ten elephants, but advertise only eight, and so on right through."

"Have you the only man in the world who can turn a double somersault over sixteen horses?"

"No; there is another man who can do it, and although he is in State Prison we didn't want to say we had the only one. We shall practice no deception and carry no humbugs."

"Have you the only baby elephant?"

"You, sir, but we don't advertise it. We don't want to be mean towards other combinations."

"Have you twice as much capital invested as any other traveling show?"

"Yes, sir, but we don't say so on the bills. The public don't care about the capital, but want to see the animals."

"Will your street parade be a mile long?"

"Two of them, sir, but we don't advertise that fact. We let people come and be agreeably surprised."

"Have you got an elephant that has killed seven men?"

"Seven! Why he's laid out eight this very winter! I think the list foots up thirty-two, but we don't advertise it. An elephant is an elephant and what's the use of blowing about it?"

"You have two or three man-eating tigers, of course?"

"Of course—seven or eight of them, and we also have a list of the names of people who have been eaten by them, but we make no blow about it."

"Have you a boa-constrictor forty-eight feet long?"

"We have one sixty-two feet long. He's the longest and largest snake ever imported, but we give him only one line on the bills."

"Have you the sacred cow of India?"

"Yes, sir, and the sacred ox of Japan, and a sacred calf and a sacred pig, but we don't blow over 'em. We let the public come in and separate the sacred from the unsacred [profane would have been a better word choice] themselves."

"Will you have two circus rings?"

"We shall have four, but we don't put it on the bills. As I told you at the start we are making a new departure. We shall not exaggerate. We shall not even tell the plain truth. No diamonds—no trumpets—no snide challenges—no humbug offers—no field of the cloth of gold. We are going to sail along in a gentle, modest way and give the people five times the worth of their money. That's all—children halfprice and no lemonade sold in the tent." Detroit Free Press.

Factory hands in Paterson, New Jersey, literally escaped from work on 6 May to see the exhibition. The following passages are instructive, too, for revealing the prevalence of inflated numbers in newspaper reports. The first article states that 20,000 people saw Barnum and London at Paterson that day. If that were, in fact, the case most of them got in on passes as the revenue was \$6297 [\$131,749], only about 10% over the season's average. Likewise, the Bowser financial records show that Newark brought in \$9137 [\$191,169], a good day to be sure, but far short of the \$15,000 claimed in some papers. 39

Barnum's Great Show, New Haven (Connecticut) Evening Register, 7 May 1881, p. 3.

There is nothing that stirs Paterson, N. J., so much as a circus. The rainy weather yesterday apparently had no effect upon the attendance at Barnum's great show, although it somewhat diminished the street display. Twenty-five thousand persons work in the Paterson mills. A large proportion of these are girls and boys. When the sound of music was heard in the streets they rushed from their work. It was in vain that the foremen of the mills along which the parade passed locked the doors and tried to keep the workers in. they climbed out of the windows and other exits, and ran to see the show. The consequence was that the mills in the afternoon were deserted. Some had to shut down entirely. Others ran only part of the time. The schools were tolerably well attended in the morning, but in the afternoon the teachers found themselves confronted with an array of empty seats and the classes had to be consolidated.

Not only the mill hands and school children rushed to the how; staid and elderly church members went and took their children along to see the animals. A hard shower in the afternoon caused the water to drip unpleasantly through the canvas, and thousands of umbrellas were raised to the intense and loudly expressed disgust of those in the rear. The show was attended by 20,000 persons during the day. Business was almost suspended. The city was circus mad. Despite the excitement, however, good order was preserved.

The Fitchburg (Massachusetts) Sentinel, 11 May 1881, p.

Paterson, N. J., May 10.—Pelgram & Meyer, silk manufacturers of this city, claimed that the loss suffered by them through the absence of their mill hands last Friday, when Barnum's great show was in town, amounted to \$2 for each man who was absent. They proposed on Saturday to deduct from the wages of those of their hands who had left their work on account of the circus. The men at once went on a strike.

The Brooklyn (New York) Daily Eagle, 12 August 1881, p.

There was a circus show in Paterson, N. J., and the loss to the manufacturers amounted to between \$30,000 and \$40,000. There will be another there on the 27th inst., and the people are already making arrangements to go to it.

Barnum and London played a week in Brooklyn starting 9 May. The following review is particularly good in explaining the class structure of the audience and the continued ambivalence of some patrons toward the entertainment. The description of the bicycling Stirk family in this report is an anomaly; they are not mentioned in any other account, including the route book.

The Combination Show, The Brooklyn (New York) Daily Eagle, 10 May 1881, p. 2.

The grand combined consolidated show is here at last and the first performances were such as to justify the encomiums showered upon the show wherever it has been. Stripped of the verbiage of the sawdust ring, it may be spoken of truthfully as the best of its kind that has ever been in Brooklyn, and each performer is to be counted among the best of his or her kind in the world. There are no defects, no halting acts thrown in to kill the time between the perfect ones, but each of the multitude introduced in the three rings seems animated by a desire to do something never done before. The circus opened yesterday afternoon with the slimmest audience it will have this week, even if it should rain every day, and still it was a good audience. There was money in it, and it was good in that respect. It was also good in respect of its character. Of course, there were all kinds, as there are in a theater, too; but it was not as a rule a peanut eating crowd. It is true that a very large number of adults entered on the backs of children, and it was surprising to observe what strong backs many of these children had. In some cases one little boy or girl just able to toddle brought in as many as three grown people, each one of whom came along "just to take care of the child and see that it wasn't lost or mashed in the crowd," and when the little one would fall asleep, as little ones are apt to do, they were very careful not to disturb the little darling's slumbers. But, after all, it made no difference to the ticket taker why they came, or to the performers who showed their acquaintance with human nature by playing at them, as well as to the youngsters whose delight was more demonstrative, but none the more apparent than that of the children of an older growth, and when

MR. BARNUM LOOKED ABOUT HIM

And saw the genteel, not to say fashionable audience gathered in the tent, his pleasure took the form of decided expression. The old gentleman was looking heartier than when here last, and notwithstanding the number of times he must have already witnessed the whole performance, he watched each separate act as keenly as though it were entirely new to him, and expressed satisfaction as openly as the rest. When, for instance, the terrific leaping act, in which a number of athletes turn a double somersault over the backs of half a dozen elephants, one mounted on top of the rest, Mr. Barnum remarked to a friend at his side just before the start was made: "I never see that act without trembling." Just then the first tumbler came over and landed safely on the immense cushion spread to receive him, when Mr. Barnum, with a motion of relief, exclaimed: "That was good," and joined in the general applause. But, speaking of the audience present, it was worth while to note that there were many grown people, evidently in good circumstances, who made no pretence of feeling themselves out of place there. For instance, when one gentleman came across an acquaintance in the throng viewing the animals in the menagerie, and expressed a little surprise at meeting him there, the latter responded, "Not at all; there is nothing here of an immoral character, as there often is, unfortunately, in theaters; and one may learn much as well as be much entertained by what he can see here. Now, I never knew before that the Asiatic elephant differs from his African congener in having a comparatively small ear. You see the elephant over there, with an immense flapping ear, like an enormous fan? Well, that's the African species. These with smaller ears are the Asian, and Mr. Bailey tells me that the Asian are worth at least twice as much as the African, because they are more docile, more intelligent, much hardier and longer lived. He sold one African for \$2000 and bought an Asian for \$5000. As to their powers of endurance, he says that the African is always suffering, except in warm weather, and that the Asian can stand this climate well; they had them working last Winter pushing wagons in the snow. . . .

The first thing noteworthy inside was the fine band of brass and reed instruments, which discourses good music during the performances and plays in better unison than is sometimes found in theaters, even where operas are being given. When all were seated, the procession of the animals, equine, ox and others, took place, and like the procession of the equinoxes they all got back to the place they started from in due time. Then came General Tom Thumb and his little wife, and last, though not least, Chang the Chinese giant. There was a horse about a foot and a half taller than the ordinary horse, and an ox of nearly the same propor tions, and out in the tents there was a pony colt, born on Sunday morning about half past ten o'clock, but though a bright little fellow with a lively pair of heels, he was not introduced,. His parents are small, compact animals of German origin.

The world famous baby elephant, born in America,



Chang may have been tall, but hardly more than double the height of these onloookers. Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

marched with the rest, and a curious feature of the procession was found in the pair of giraffes and the pair of zebras broken to harness, though they are generally considered intractable. But, perhaps, among all the animals, including the trained oxen, which play see saw like a couple of children, the performing black stallions and the elephants are the most remarkable. Those who have never seen them perform would scarcely believe that the dull looking, bulky

MASTONDON OF TO-DAY

could be taught the meaning of single words, and at the sound, form in line of march in solid column; "right flank, double file, march;" "left flank, wheel, single file, march on the double quick," as these giant animals do. As for the Ukraine and Trakene stallions, their elegance of form and motion is only equaled by their intelligence. They waltz more gracefully, but not with more precision than do the elephants.

Concerning the men and women performers, they are all excellent in their way, but there are so many of them that only a few can be mentioned. The tight rope acts, by Misses Louise Boshell and May Antonio, evidenced great skill, and received merited applause, as did also the graceful riing of Miss Benedict, Miss Emma Lake and Madames Cordona and Dockrill. It would be hard to choose between them, though Madame Dockrill has the reputation of being the most graceful and perfect of living equestriennes. There

were also some exciting exhibitions of equestrian skill by Mr. Wm. Dutton, Mr. Frank Melville, Mr. Frank Gardner and Senor Don Gerinimo Bell. A very grotesque performance was given by the Lorella Brothers, who, like Messrs. Geyer and Ashton, seem to have joints that turn either way with equal ease. The former gave a comical dance, and twisted themselves into barrels less than half their own size, besides doing many other things that excited laughter, and the latter exhibited powers of contortion that seemed supernatural. The same might be said of Prince Katsnoshin, the Japanese juggler. An extremely funny exhibition of muscular power and skill was that of the Boisset Brothers, who have succeeded in developing the use of the double horizontal bar to an extent scarcely thought possible a few years ago. One of them in the guise of a clown created a great deal of merriment. The juggling of Karoley and Augusta Ordey was another special feature, and the bicycle riding of the Stirk family, another. Much skill and courage was shown by a member of the Stirk family, who is probably less than four years of age. The Davene family also give some performances on the trapeze, which for skill and daring stand unrivaled.

But these are only a part of the exhibition and to appreciate it properly one must see it.

The Brooklyn run was fair, \$34,627 [\$724,483] for six days.

While both Barnum and Bailey had told reporters that the show would give three shows a day in some locations, the practice was abandoned a little over a month into the season.

The Barnum Show, New Haven (Connecticut) Evening Register, 12 May 1881, p. 4.

The managers of the Barnum and London circus find that while traveling they will be unable to give three performances daily without detriment to the performers, and without impairing the excellence of the entertainment. Consequently but two performances, afternoon and evening, will be given in this city, and as the morning performance is to be omitted the gratuitous street parade will take place at 9 o'clock, a half hour later than has been advertised. The public is really the gainer by this change, for the omission of one performance can but result in making the other two of a higher degree of excellence. . . .

The circus business still had a reputation for encouraging or at least condoning such practices as pocket picking, gambling, confidence schemes, and robbery. *The New York Dramatic News* campaigned against illegal practices in its columns that year, naming names. Among the guilty were Batcheller and Doris; Pullman, Shelby and Hamilton; Sells Bros.; John Robinson; W. W. Cole; John O'Brien's Circus Royal; and the Great Forepaugh Show. W. C. Coup's Circus and Barnum and London were among the few shows that did not tolerate grift in any form. Even then, it was difficult to rid themselves of the floating population of con artists who plagued circuses, fairs, community festivals and other events that attracted crowds.

The Circus and the Thieves, New Haven (Connecticut) Evening Register, 13 May 1881, p. 4.

The management of the Barnum-London consolidated shows deny the statement published that there is a gang of professional thieves and pickpockets following the show, and claim that this far this season robberies have been the exception and not the rule. They claim that during this week, while the show has been exhibiting at Brooklyn, there has been but one case of pocket-picking, that being the theft of a gold watch on Monday morning, this being effected before the canvas was fairly pitched. In order to protect their patrons, the managers have constantly in their employ, and traveling with them, four of Pinkerton's best detectives ready to spot and arrest any suspicious character. All large concourses of people naturally attract and invite thieves and pickpockets, and despite the efforts of the managers of the show to keep such people away, it is best for all to be on their guard against these characters, whom even the most expert detectives cannot detect.

It wasn't only professional swindlers who engaged in con games. As the following account documents, even temperance advocates could be morally flexible on occasion

It Didn't Work, New Haven (Connecticut) Evening Register, 14 May 1881, p. 3.

While P. T. Barnum was in Philadelphia last week with his show he lectured before a temperance society, and at the close hundreds pressed around him with albums and cards for his autograph. Mr. Barnum wrote his name, until becoming weary he was forced to desist. The next day when the circus opened, the doorkeeper was astonished to find a large number asking admission on a plain white ticket signed "P. T. Barnum. Admit one." In some cases two or more persons attempted to get into the show in the same way on one ticket. As there were no free passes of any kind issued by the show this little trick to outwit the old showman was not successful. One man had inscribed on his autograph card "admit five," which was crowding the mourners. This is only one of a thousand dodges that are daily played to see the big show free of cost.

Barnum and London was popular enough and public's aversion to waiting in lines was great enough, that ticket scalpers flourished, presumably selling the ducats for a nickel or dime over face value. The show put an end to the practice by printing tickets good only for one specific performance. Hutchinson made a generous peace with the speculators.

Ticket Speculators Balked, New York (New York) Times, 21 May 1881, p. 2.

From the Bridgeport (Conn.) Standard, May 17.

The ticket speculators have made the managers of the Barnum and London show no end of trouble, but they have owned up beaten at last. Determining to break up the system at any cost, it was decided to issue new and different tickets for each performance, and that all should be dated. This involves an outlay of \$30 or \$40 a day for new tickets, but the plan has worked so well that the managers will not grumble at the trifling expense. The new tickets were used yesterday for the first time. Ten or fifteen speculators were on hand, but the agents of the show stood out on the streets and cautioned people not to buy of them, as the tickets would not be accepted at the door, and by night the whole gang was ready to surrender. One of them went to Mr. Hutchinson in the evening and said he had 700 tickets which he got in Brooklyn, and if the managers would take

them back he would sign a paper agreeing to follow the show no longer. Another speculator said he had 200, and would make the same terms. The result was that the whole gang were (sic) called in and their tickets taken back and paid for, and all signed an agreement to give up the business.

The advance advertising car's arrival was cause for celebration. The following described Advance Car No. 1, which traveled about three weeks ahead of the show. The advent of the advance car was usually newsworthy, especially if the show advertised in the paper carrying the story. This account is particularly illuminating. The route book names the boss of the car Henry Hedges, not A. C. Hedges as noted in the article.

The Coming of Barnum & Co.'s Circus,
Poughkeepsie (New York) Daily Eagle, No
Date, but early June 1881, n. p. n. Typescript
in "1881-1887 Barnum and London Circus," vertical file,
Circus World Museum.

SANGERS ROYAL BRITISH MENAGERIE NO GRAND INTERNATIONAL ALLIED SHOWS

ANGERS ROYAL BRITISH MENAGERIE NO GRAND INTERNATIONAL ALLIED SHOWS

4 ACCMSOLIDATION OF THE P.T.BARNUM. J.A.BAILEP & J.L.HUTCHINSON. 4 ACCMSOLIDATION

The large car connected with the bill posting department of the Great London Circus, which has been here a day or two, was hitched to the 2:38 train yesterday afternoon to be taken to Troy, and thence to Saratoga. The superintendent of the car was Mr. A. C. Hedges, a Dutchess County boy, and whose relations reside in Pine Plains. He has been in the circus business about twelve years. He has eleven men under him, who within the past two days have posted in this city and county over 3000 bills. In this city three bill boards, each about two hundred feet long, have been put up especially for the bills of this circus. Besides this, the store windows and other places about the city are filled with fancy colored lithographs, and show cards of all descriptions.

The car is a model of neatness, and well worth looking at. One end of it is partitioned off as Mr. Hedge's private office and is furnished in an elegant manner. Other parts of the car are used as sleeping apartments for some of them. Closets filled with bills, and other matter used in connection with the work, are located on the sides of the car. In fact everything connected with the work is arranged in the most convenient manner.

As showing the expense connected with this department alone, Mr. Hedges showed us a bill of \$50, paid for flour, purchased of Mr. Charles Klady, corner of Main and Clover streets, to be used in making paste. Reed & Husted, the liverymen, were also paid over \$50 for teams to take men through the country posting the bills. The large bill boards also cost a great deal.

There are a large number of Dutchess County people connected with the Great London Circus. Many of them are sons of old staid Dutchess County farmers who took it into their heads to engage in the business. All of them are well pleased with their vocation. [Barnum and London appeared in Poughkeepsie on 29 June.]

The advance publicity included a display of trophies to be awarded to the best performers at season's end. This gambit wasn't as novel as it might first appear. James



Slack wire juggler May Antonia was called the "Empress of the Slack Wire," which just didn't have the same ring as Elise Dockrill's "Empress of the Arena." Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

Robinson, Elise Dockrill, and other star performers often displayed their medals and trophies, often in the window of the store selling advance tickets. Contests and challenges between performers was something of a staple up through the 1880s.

Prizes for Barnum's Athletes, New Haven (Connecticut) Sunday Union, 15 May 1881, n. p. n.

The curiosity and admiration of large numbers of persons were excited this morning by the three elegant and beautiful trophies which are to be presented to meritorious performers of Barnum's show, which were displayed in Canfield's window, corner of Charles and Baltimore streets. They are to be given to the best tumblers and leapers at the close of the season. An accurate record will be kept of each trial . . . during the season and at the end of the traveling tour the man having a majority of the victorious contests will win.

Between Messrs. Frank A. Gardner and W. H. Batcheller, champion, there has long existed a friendly rivalry and at the close of the season the victor will be awarded one of the elegant prizes. The first is a massive urn of solid silver, inlaid with gold. It is mounted on a beautifully turned ebony pedestal, on which rests a base of silver, on which stands a tripod consisting of three golden lions, which in turn supports the urn proper, the handles of which represent exquisitely carved elephant's heads. The lid is surmounted by an exquisite statue of a winged goddess standing on a dolphin's back. The second prize is a vase elegantly wrought, resting on a base of ebony. The vase proper is heavily inlaid with chased gold, the handles being horses' heads. The third prize is a champion belt. This is an exquisite piece of workmanship. Its outer rims are composed of silver bands, between which are thirteen medallions engraved with scenes of the equestrian and gymnastic arena, two of them having excellent likenesses of Batcheller

and Gardner. The trophies, which are made of solid silver were the work of Messrs. Tiffany & Co., New York, and cost upwards of \$1000. They are all suitably inscribed, blanks being left for the names of the victors. They were offered by Messrs. Barnum, Bailey and Hutchinson as incentives to the actors in their show to excel in their different departments.

Stereoscopic slide shows were another facet of the advance. The big shows in the 1870s and 1880s projected slides showing the wonders to be seen on circus day. Gus Bernard performed this task, usually traveling just a few days ahead of the show. He had the same duty on Cooper and Bailey in 1879 and 1880. He was even depicted on a lithograph in 1880 (see *Bandwagon*, November-December 2007, page 46 for illustration).

Free Show To-night, The Columbus (Ohio) Dispatch, 12 August 1881, n. p. n.

At 8 p. m., near the Postoffice, the Barnum and London shows will be illustrated by hundreds of beautiful pictures illuminated by calcium lights. The museum, menagerie and grand triple circus will be placed before the public in a realistic manner, and everything pertaining to these great shows united. Amusing, humorous and entertaining to both old and young. Don't miss it.

The day prior to the Barnum show's appearance in New Haven, Connecticut, one of the local papers ran a tongue-in-cheek article on circus day etiquette. Although the piece is satirical, it neatly catalogues the transgressive behavior commonly observed on circus lots.

New Haven (Connecticut) Evening Register, 17 May 1881, p. 2.

How to behave at the circus: Be the first man to get under the lee of the ticket wagon and swear and yell until you get your tickets. This is necessary in order to show the assembled multitude what an independent go ahead sort of a man you are. Inside the tent crowd just as close to the cages of animals as you can, and poke your cane at any "roil Bengal tagger" that may happen to be taking a nap. This will render you popular with the keeper and perhaps inaugurate a quarrel that will end in a policeman marching you outside. Give a chew of tobacco to the biggest elephant, and then brag about it for a year. Offer to bet a dollar and a half that the giant is two inches and a quarter short of his published height. Inform everybody you see that the African lion is no longer considered the king of beasts, and by your gorging of peanuts and swilling of lemonade make it apparent that you have received that appointment yourself. Get the highest seat in the circus department, and as you sit enthroned on that pinnacle throw prize package covers on the bonnets of the ladies that sit below you. Try your luck at "mashing" in a bold and vigorous manner. You will thus cause more laughter than the clown. Vow that each separate act in the ring is positively the "worst you ever saw," and have it generally understood in your immediate vicinity that you once traveled with a circus yourself and know the whole business. You can do all these things and have a splendid time at the circus, and the people will think just as much of you as if you was the giant ass they had paid fifty cents to see.

Newspapers constantly commented on the popularity of circuses, often comparing their drawing power with that of churches with the latter usually coming out second. The line, "Nothing draws like a circus," summed up the place of circuses in the popular imagination. The Barnum show had particular appeal.

New Haven (Connecticut) Evening Register, 18 May 1881, p. 2.

Nothing draws like a circus. Here it is a wet drizzly day, and the whole country around came in on the morning trains. Churches should take notice, and throw out a few posters on Noah's ark, Daniel in the lion den and kindred subjects, and then, perhaps, they would have full houses.

Barnum's Circus, New Haven (Connecticut) Sunday Union, 15 May 1881, p. 3.

It can be said, and with little exaggeration, that every man, woman and child in the city of New Haven is looking forward with pleasant anticipation to the arrival of Barnum's great combination shows.

The next passage demonstrates how the New Haven police dealt with the rift raft that assembled just off the show grounds to sell food and other items. Obviously, civil liberties were less an issue in Yale University's home town in 1881 than they are now. While appearing ghoulish today, the notice about boys' selling their dogs for admission money to the circus is a reflection of another time when canines did not enjoy the status of family members as they often do today.

The Peanut Stands, New Haven (Connecticut) Evening Register, 18 May 1881, p. 4.

The chief of police to-day refused to issue licenses for peanut stands, lifting machines and other implements and merchandise, calculated to draw money from the pockets of the country people. This was to prevent the peddlers who follow Barnum from getting a foothold, for they are all given the reputation of thieves who go through the crowd when the show breaks up at night. The apparent occupation is used, it is alleged, as a cover for their real vocation. The chief had thirty applicants, more or less. Residents of this city were not given licenses but they were permitted to sell in the interest of home trade and honesty. The chief of the Pinkerton force saw the chief this morning and made him acquainted with the nature of the detective arrangements. Any thief, known to be such, found in the crowd will be turned over to the police and detained if, in the judgment of the Pinkerton men, it is deemed advisable. Several young men following the circus were locked up last night, and will be held until it leaves town. They are half-starved, wretched creatures who are not given the reputation of wonderful thieves, but whose career, constantly tending downward, it is thought best to check. . . .

The circus rage which culminated to-day has brought during the past week twelve or more unregistered dogs to the almshouse, where one dollar each has been paid for them by the town. Small boys wanted the money for their admission fee.

The West Haven road had the three new cars recently purchased and every car they had or could hire on their line to-day to accommodate parties who were going to the circus. Despite this fact the accommodations were insufficient owing to the great crowds.

Strange as it may seem to modern eyes, a circus day without trouble of some sort was newsworthy. It was, in

fact, rare for a city to host a circus and not have at least a few drunken brawls, home invasions, or confidence men. Perhaps locking up the camp followers paid off.

Nothing Happened, New Haven (Connecticut) Evening Register, 19 May 1881, p. 4.

From all the pressure of humanity on the street corners and at the circus grounds yesterday not a complaint of a



The towering elephant telescoping wagon was among the best of the parade vechicles on Barnum and London in 1881. This photograph was taken on Barnum and Bailey Circus on 21 July 1888 in South Bend, Indiana. Note attendent directly in front of the elephant with a pitch fork used to raise electrical wires along the route. During its first tour of duty in America in 1871, no assistant was necessary. Author's Collection.

theft or burglary is said to have been received by the police, who were out in full force and on the alert. The chief and detectives were hard at work on the grounds guarding against pickpockets. But a "blacksmith" at thieving might have done something in the crush. Fortunately, so far as we learn, nothing was stolen. This morning the nine vagrants and other tough young characters who followed the circus and had been detained at the lock up since Tuesday night were released.

The company ran into all kinds of trouble in New Haven and Meriden, Connecticut on 18 and 19 May. Terrible weather caused the evening performance at both towns to be cancelled. New Haven had a strong matinee with \$4795 [\$100,323] in receipts, but Meriden was a complete cropper, bringing in only \$1901 [\$39,795] in the afternoon. Some of the parade wagons were seriously damaged in a railroad accident while leaving New Haven in the rain. When a group of canvas men tried to quit the show after fighting the weather in New Haven, they asked Hutchinson for wages due and presumably their holdbacks. Never a friend of organized labor, Hutchinson refused. So they went on strike in Hartford on 20 May. They were promptly dismissed, and replaced by locals.

A Circus in Trouble, New Haven (Connecticut) Evening

Register, 19 May 1881, p. 1.

Owing to the severe storm yesterday afternoon and evening the performance which was to have been given by the London Barnum circus last evening was abandoned and by eight, the hour advertised for the opening of the show, the gaudy chariots, vans of animals, tent and other paraphernalia had been carted to the special cars used by

the consolidation, at Belle Dock, and loaded ready for transportation to Meriden. As fast as the chariots were loaded on the flat cars they were moved down the dock toward the water, until a train was made up. These chariots passed under the coal elevators in safety on their trip down, but when they were dragged upon the dock, en route to Meriden, the gaudy chariots ornamented elaborately with mirrors and richly gilded figures, collided with the machinery of one of the coal pockets, and was nearly smashed. The side of the calliope, or orchestra-melohor (sic), as it is termed by the cir-

cus men, was partially crushed in, and one end of one of the band wagons was thrown from the car, this being damaged somewhat by the accident. The remains of the cars were taken on to Meriden with the rest of the material. The damaged wagons will probably be sent to Bridgeport for repairs, and then forwarded to wherever the circus may be located.

The bad weather followed the circus to Meriden this morning. A street parade was made and as there was a cessation in the rain at the proper time a show was given in the afternoon. Owing to the continued bad weather no performance will be given this evening.

Yesterday afternoon twenty-five of the employees asked for their money so that they might leave the show and return to New York. The spokesman of the party said this was done because they had had enough of the circus business. Mr. Hutchinson refused to pay them and they remained with the show, going on to Meriden.

Of the show itself there seems to be but one opinion that it was the best ever given here, but that there is too much of it for anyone to enjoy and appreciate at one time.

Some \$2000 worth of tickets purchased for the performance at Loomis' Temple of Music, yesterday, was redeemed by the management, Dave Thomas remaining there until 10 o'clock this morning for that purpose. That the rain should have prevented the evening performance was a disappointment to thousands who desired to attend.

Various Matters, New Haven (Connecticut) Evening Register, 23 May 1881, p. 4.

Some of the green hands employed by the Barnum show as canvas men struck for higher wages while in Hartford last week. Their places were promptly filled, several Hartford men being engaged. The older hands, more accustomed to bad weather work, do not strike.

Business picked up as the troupe finished May with a swing through Rhode Island and Massachusetts. The show's daily revenue broke into five digits for the first time during the week of 23 to 28 May. In fact, it topped \$10,000 three times that week in Springfield and Worcester, Massachusetts; and Providence, Rhode Island. The income in Providence was \$12,252 [\$256,343], the third highest of the season. Not surprisingly, it was the best

week of the year with total revenue of \$53,364

[\$1,116,508].

In May the Forepaugh situation heated up again. His show was billed for Bloomington. Illinois on 25 May. The Barnum Circus, which wasn't scheduled in Bloomington until 8 September, put up opposition billing three and a half months in advance of its appearance. The mercurial John W. Hamilton, head of the Barnum show's opposition brigade, and his men posted deceptive posters that advised the causal observer that no circus would be in Bloomington until after 27 May, suggesting that Forepaugh was not going to appear on the 25th. Hamilton and his minions were arrested. but quickly released.

Barnum and London nurtured its reputation as a high-class, morally uplifting show that catered to middle and upper class families. Newspaper reports regularly commented on pany, often favorably comparing it to the vul- 4 LARGEST SHOWS. garity displayed at other circuses. It seems

remarkable that this paragon of virtue, disguised as a traveling entertainment, engaged in fraudulent and duplicitous practices such as covering competitors' paper, or spreading rumors that rivals harbored personnel infected with small pox. Yet, the Barnum show did just that.

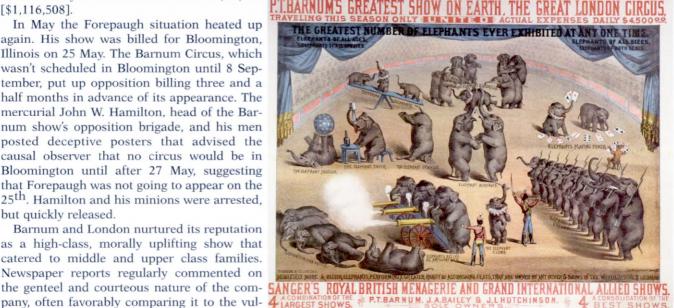
Forepaugh placed a reader in the Bloomington Pantagraph on show day, to complain about "the unscrupulous and incompetent advance agents" who covered his posters and to assure Bloomingtonians that his great circus was coming that day. 40 Hamilton's effort apparently didn't hurt attendance as the next day's Pantagraph noted the huge crowds in its enthusiastic review.

Forepaugh had finally had enough of Hamilton's antics and pressed charges against the Barnum bill posters for defacing his posters. Hamilton was tracked down in Chicago where he was also arrested soon after. The Barnum billers filed suit against Forepaugh, and it took a few months for all the charges to be dropped. The account below makes the salient point that while the paper covering and accusations against other circuses were common practice by the standards of the time, the opposition battles of 1881 were excessive.

Circus Litigation, The Pantagraph, Bloomington, Illinois, 26 May 1881, n. p. n.

The telegraphic columns of the Pantagraph yesterday morning gave the public an intimation of trouble brewing between Forepaugh's and Barnum's showmen. The Barnum show appears here later in the season, and to keep the

people from going to the Forepaugh show, Barnum's advertising brigade here have been posting, just in advance of Forepaugh's Show, "No Show till after May 27th." These words were in large, showy type. Below, in very small type, were the words that completed the sentence: "By Barnum, Bailey and Hutchinson." Passers-by naturally would read the first line and fail to see the one below in fine print, and the inference would be that no show was coming sooner than that date.



The show had a tremendous elephant presentation using the best of the herds from the Barnum Circus and Cooper and Bailey. Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

This style of placarding was carried out in Danville, Champaign and Bloomington, which was billed Tuesday as well as all the surrounding towns within reach. Tuesday evening Mr. Hugh Coyle, Forepaugh's press agent, came to town and consulted with Lucas and Phillips, and swore out a warrant for the arrest of the Barnum brigade, which was slumbering in the Ashley House after a hard day's work. At 5 o'clock yesterday morning, when they arose to go to Peoria to work that city the same way, Constable Press Butler, assisted by Capt. Bentley and two patrolmen, arrested them. There were five in all, J. H. Decker, chief; John Mapin, Chas. Thurber, Harry McKnight and Joseph Freeburg. They were placed in the calaboose till 10 o'clock, when they were tried before 'Squire Fulwiler for violating the city's bill posting ordinance. It was proved that Decker only billed this city, and he was fined fifteen dollars, which he paid, and was discharged with the others. All were immediately arrested on a State warrant for conspiring to injure Forepaugh. They were then quartered in an upper room of the Ashley House to await their preliminary trial, which will occur this morning at nine o'clock. They are represented by Stevenson & Ewing, and will give bail in any required sum with Hewitt & Hermance as security.

James [John] T. [W.] Hamilton. in charge of the Barnum

brigade, escaped arrest, having gone to Chicago on Tuesday night. Pres. Butler went to Chicago yesterday afternoon to arrest him if he could be found.

Getting Back at Forepaugh

Not at all disheartened at their peculiar experience, the Barnum boys, five in number, have instituted suit for \$5000 each for damages for false imprisonment against Adam Forepaugh and Hugh Coyle. The summons was served last night at the close of the performance

All season the rivalry of the two shows has been very bitter, and from the feeling engendered and the high ability of the attorneys retained, we may expect a stirring legal contest over the sharp practices of the knights of the tented canvas.

It is understood that Barnum has a suit for \$50,000 pending against Forepaugh, somewhere in the east, and that Bailey and Hutchinson, the managers of the Barnum show, will be arrested here on the same charge as that one which their men are now held. Coup's circus is following Barnum closely, and is said to be practicing much the same tactics that Barnum does on Forepaugh, and that Forepaugh does on Sell's [Sells] circus. All in all the present is a very lively circus season.

Contending Circuses, The Daily Inter Ocean, Chicago, Illinois, 27 May 1881, p. 3.

The rivalry between the opposition circus proprietors is growing warm and fierce. Hitherto they had been content to resort to comparatively mild means for the circumvention of each other, and often times have run against each other without causing very serious results. Now, however, they promise to become entangled in legal webs, and aside from exhibitions of daring equestrians, wild animals, etc., furnish some entertainment for the public in the form of lawsuits. The Barnum and London shows combined this year, and have for their principal opponent Forepaugh. In Baltimore, Washington, and Philadelphia the contest was very lively. Barnum came immediately after Forepaugh, and claimed to have done an unprecedented business. This exasperated Forepaugh, and widened the breach between the parties, and finally led to a suit for damages against the Barnum managers for \$50,000 in Philadelphia.

In the circus business it is customary for each show to protect its own stands in every town on its route by what is called billing other shows; that is, it announces the time of its own appearance, and asks the public to wait.

TRICKS OF THE TRADE

In pursuance of this plan John W. Hamilton, of the Barnum show, organized a brigade of picked men to come out West and bill all the towns on the Western route that any other show was likely to take. In Detroit and Toledo he met Coup's show, and billed it thoroughly. In Buffalo; Danville, this State; Lafayette, Ind.; and Bloomington he found it necessary to do the same, Forepaugh having taken his stands. In Bloomington he got out a bill reading this way: "No circus in Bloomington till after May 27 by the Barnum and London United Shows." This hurt the opposition and they resorted to means to get even. Interested parties cut off the last line, the most important part of the notice. At this point Forepaugh again resorted to law. Mr. Hamilton left Bloomington early Tuesday morning for Chicago, leaving his men to go to Peoria. When he arrived here he received a

telegram stating that his chief bill-poster had been arrested and put in jail at the insistance of Forepaugh. He immediately telegraphed back to him to employ lawyers to defend him. Wednesday evening, after an engagement at the Sherman House with a friend, Mr. Hamilton retired to the Commercial Hotel, and the following morning at 2 o'clock he was awakened by a knock at his door, and upon asking who it was, received the reply that McDonald was there.

AN UNLAWFUL ARREST

Thinking it was somebody on business connected with the show, he opened the door. He was then informed by McDonald, who was a detective, that he had a warrant for his arrest, at the same time McDonald apologized for the intrusion. All inquiries failed to reveal the cause of the arrest, McDonald saying that it would be all right when the chief heard about it. However, upon reaching the station, no better satisfaction was obtained, and the information was given that the Chief might get to the office about 5 o'clock. Hamilton requested to be allowed to remain in an adjoining room, but this was denied him. He was locked up in the hole known as a cell at the Central Station. After a good deal of entreaty, permission was given to communicate with Mr. Ingraham, of the Commercial Hotel, and Mr. Toole, of the Royal Circus, who at once proceeded to secure legal assistance and took means for his release. Early yesterday morning an officer arrived from Bloomington with a warrant for Hamilton's arrest. While the officer was out at breakfast Hamilton got out a writ of habeas corpus. Judge Moran heard it, and released Hamilton on \$2000 bail until to-day. It appears that McDonald took Hamilton without any warrant, the only authority being a telegram. Hamilton will at once commence a suit for \$20,000 damages against Forepaugh for false imprisonment.

Tensions between the shows continued after the Bloomington affair.

The Duluth (Minnesota) Daily Tribune, 31 May 1881, p.

The advance agent of Forepaugh's great show was in the city yesterday, for the purpose of cautioning the public against the crooked ways of a rival concern under the management of Barnum. It seems that the Forepaugh show is ahead of the other, but wherever Adam has billed his exhibition, P. T. Barnum's bill posters have followed and pasted streamers, announcing that "the circus will not be here--," the date of Barnum's performance. This aggravated Forepaugh, and he had Barnum's agents and bill posters arrested at Indianapolis [Bloomington], and properly fined. At Champaign, Ill., it was announced that Forepaugh's circus was bringing an epidemic along with it. Barnum was sued for \$50,000 damages, and his agents and bill poster were cast into prison. The agent got out on a writ of habeas corpus, and skipped the town, but the bill posters still languish behind the bars. This quarrel between rival circus managers is decidedly entertaining, but the public will probably patronize both to the limit of the capacity of their respective tents.—St. Paul Globe.

In September the *New York Dramatic News* stated that the law suits were all dismissed, adding "Thus ends what promised to be a long and tedious lot of law suits." ⁴¹ The attorneys must have been in despair.

Hugh Coyle, Forepaugh's man in Bloomington, later

said that the Barnum show settled for \$5000, PTBARNUM'S GRE half of which went to Forepaugh's attorneys. Of more significance, Coyle claimed the agreement between the companies included a contract to divide territory in 1882, so the shows would stay out of one another's way. Whether or not such a pact resulted from the Bloomington fight, the shows did draw up a routing agreement for 1882, a draft of which survives. In 1882, the rivals appeared in the same town twenty times, but with the exception of early season stands in Philadelphia, Washington, Baltimore, at least 101 days separated their appearances with many being five or six months apart. 42

June began at Lowell, Massachusetts, followed by Lawrence, Salem and Lynn before a week's stand in Boston from 6 to 11 June. on the run. Boston provided excellent business, bringing \$44,683 [\$934,880] for the week with a \$10,000 and two \$11,000 days.

The parade in Salem, Massachusetts provided more excitement than the show intended.

Barnum's Snakes, Chicago (Illinois) Daily Tribune, 4 June 1881, p. 2.

Boston, June 3.—While Barnum's circus was parading in Salem to-day the six horses attached to the serpent cage ran away and upset the wagon, and for a few minutes there was a lively stampede among the large crowd as the forty reptiles wriggled about on the pavement. The boa-constrictors and anacondas were especially lively, but the coolness of the keeper and other employees prevented any accident. In half an hour the reptiles were all gathered up again, and the agent promptly settled for a collision with another team.

The troupe entered Maine at Bangor on 13 June, staving in the state through the 17th. Engagements in New Hampshire, Massachusetts and New York finished out the month. The following review for the engagement at Augusta, Maine on 14 June is one of the more literate, detailed and insightful notices the show received. It even observed that the company gave a "John Robinson" at the night performance.

The only discordant note is the last paragraph which states that close to 20,000 people saw the circus that day. This must be an exaggeration as the day's revenue was \$5098 [\$106,663], enough to make money, but certainly not the financial bonanza a mammoth crowd would have brought in. Overall, the Maine dates were big money makers with Bangor bringing in \$9773 [\$204,476], and Portland \$10,344 [\$216,422].

Barnum's Greatest Show, Daily Kennebec (Maine) Journal, 15 June 1881, p. 3.

For years past the arrival of a circus in Augusta has been the occasion for immense gatherings of people. But all former crowds were outnumbered yesterday. As early as three o'clock in the morning straggling teams began to pour in from the country towns, and the number increased stead ly all day, until our streets and stores fairly swarmed with thousands of eager and perspiring spectators. The Barnum



Emma Lake, the daughter of William and Agnes Lake, was a featured manage rider on the show. Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

trains arrived from Bangor at 4:30 o'clock in the morning, and were greeted by the cheers of a vast concourse. From that hour until evening the city streets were jammed by an excited, surging multitude. Special trains from Waterville, Hallowell, Gardiner, and from cities and towns up and down the river, brought their quota of living freight, while the country towns seemed to empty themselves into Augus-

The Street Parade

At a little past ten o'clock the grand procession started from the circus grounds though the densely packed streets. Every available niche along the route was occupied, and the sidewalks were deluged by an overflowing tide of human beings. The procession was the finest spectacular display ever made in this city. The weather was propitious, being overcast, foggy and cool in the morning, while later the sun blazed out in full effulgence. There was a fine parade. First came a grand gilded chariot containing a good band of musicians uniformed in blue, with crimson trimmings; this was followed by handsomely dressed riders on elegantly caparisoned steeds. Then followed the cage of lions with their trainer, all in full sight; then came the various cages of tigers, panthers, leopards, hyenas, and serpents all with their tamers; the animals all looked well and as if the offices of their keepers were not sinecures; following these was a magnificent golden chariot with a chime of bells; then came the celebrated trained black stallions with their grooms; next was a high golden chariot with a lady perched high in the air on a globe, the chariot was drawn by eight gray horses; in turn were some handsomely painted menagerie carts; then a band chariot without riders; following was a superb golden chariot with classical figures of horses and athletes; now more menagerie; following was a gilded car with bagpipes in Highland costume, this was preceded and followed by camels in single file; after these was a Roman car drawn by four small camels; next came the car with a group on top wearing grotesque masks, then the steam piano, then pony carriages, and numerous zebras; now followed Tom Thumb's diminutive coach; the sacred oxen; the Modoc band; a gilded elephant chariot and a large drove of those wonderful animals; then a car of Jubilee singers drawn by elephants; another golden and red car drawn by these beasts; then a steam Calliope. The procession was lengthy and everything was carried out in good style. The display evoked wonder and admiration from the thousands who lined the streets, and gave a foretaste of the fine exhibitions to be made. The leading streets of the city were traversed and the inmates of residences and business houses in every section left their vocations to view the animated sight.

On the Circus Grounds

Soon after twelve o'clock the streets leading to the circus grounds were thronged with people anxious to gain admittance to the show. A tremendous throng was on hand at one o'clock, and the ticket sellers' wagons were besieged by thousands. The multitude was augmented by steady streams of people from every side. There were the usual number of outside attractions, besides the great tents. Booths where red and seductive lemonade, hot peanuts and pygmy slices of pineapple, were retailed, abounded. Hawkers were numerous, crying their ware in stentorian tones. Vendors of notions were doing a brisk business. Side-shows abounded, and the gentlemen with tanned faces and toughened palms spent their money lavishly in taking the attractions all in.

Under the Canvas

At an early hour in the afternoon the two immense pavilions of the Barnum and Great London show were crowded, with an audience that averaged much better socially than is usually seen in a circus. The best people go to see this great show, and well they may for it fine in every respect, and nothing is said or done to offend the most delicate. The menagerie was the centre of attraction for everybody. The cages were arranged in systematic order and were continuously surrounded by groups of curious people. There was not a thing exhibited that did not prove of interest. The leading objects of attraction were the giraffes, sea lions, the snakes, and rare specimens of the feathered tribe. The lions and tigers were large and active, and there were many odd, queer looking animals never before seen in this section. Chang, the Chinese giant, sold his photographs, shook hands with the crowd and conversed in excellent English with all who spoke to him, while Gen. Tom Thumb and wife were affable and were looked upon with as much wonder as ever. The giant horse, baby elephant, giant ox and baby camel attracted much attention and were all objects of wonder. At two o'clock the great tent covering the two rings were (sic) filled from one end to the other.

We can conscientiously speak in very high terms of the performances in the three rings. The amount of talent is so large that if there were but two rings the performances would spin out to a tiresome length. As it is, every moment is utilized, and the attention is held throughout. The entrée was a grand affair. It included the elephants, camels and horses, with elaborately dressed riders. The band played as the procession made the circuit on the outside of the rings. The spectacle was very fine. Two Ukrane (sic) and five Trakene stallions were put through many admirable movements

by R. H. Dockrill. After the trained oxen performed there was some extraordinary leaping from a "spring board," by a number of athletes. Frank Gardner jumped from the board over six elephants, revolved in the air a number of times, and came down safely on his feet. M'lle Boshell and Miss May Antonio did some excellent acting on the slack wire, and Wm. Elder showed his dexterity in jumping. William Dutton and Adelaide Cordona followed in wonderful displays of equestrianism. Geyer and Ashton, gymnasts, and the Boisset Brothers, on the double horizontal bar, exhibited great skill, while Edwin Bibby and Prof. Hoefler gave a good idea of the wonders of a professional wrestling match. Misses Emma Lake and Mattie Benedict, with fine black horses, performed many graceful acts, and Frank Melville and Frank Gardner, bareback riders, went through several neat jockey feats. Awata Katsnoshin, the Japanese juggler; Boisset Brothers, acrobats; and Mons. and Mme. Ordey, jugglers, gave entertaining and skillful performances which were followed by wonderful feats of bareback riding by Mme. Dockrill. The troupe of elephants were (sic) brought in and went through acts that were the cause of much astonishment. The Davene troupe of gymnast elicited much applause by daring and difficult exhibitions on the trapeze, and the performance came to a close by Mme. Dockrill and Frank Melville executing perilous feats with five horses.

In the evening there was another vast crowd. The tents were illuminated with electric lights which threw an intense brilliancy over the interior of the pavilions. The performers were similar to those of the afternoon, but concluded at an early hour, in order to gain time, as the circus will pitch tents in Bath to-day.

The reception which was given the consolidation here was without a precedent in the annals of amusements in this county. It is estimated that nearly 20,000 people attended the afternoon and evening performances.

Problems with thieves and pickpockets surfaced again in Manchester, New Hampshire on 21 June. The Barnum management made a concerted effort to rid their circus of the crooks who trailed it, but as the following reference notes, even they could not eliminate it completely.

Local Matters, The Fitchburg (Massachusetts) Sentinel, 22 June 1881, p. 3.

While Barnum's circus was parading the streets in Manchester, N. H., Tuesday, the houses of several prominent citizens were robbed. At one place the plunder amounted to about \$400

The above is only one of several dispatches which show that a gang of thieves and pickpockets follow Barnum's show and work while everybody else is watching the procession. Barnum's detectives will spot these rascals if they show themselves in the tents, but the thieves are more apt to break into houses and pick pockets on the crowded sidewalks while the procession is passing.

The following after notices sound many of the common themes in reviews. Dave Thomas, the press agent traveling with the show, received encomiums from newspaper editors throughout the season. And no wonder. He had the press transported to the circus grounds in a carriage, gave them center ring seats, answered all their questions, escorted them around the lot, and generally made sure



Parade wagons were popular subjects on posters. These two tableau wagons bear a vague resemblance to two of the four New York Tableaus associated with Barnum's circuses for years. Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

they all had a good time. Outgoing, genial, gracious, informative and helpful, a good press agent such as Thomas made a reporter's job easier, and not co-incidentally garnered excellent publicity and reviews for the show. He was a huge asset, and undoubtedly was partially responsible for the almost universally sensational reviews the show received.

The Great Show, The Fitchburg (Massachusetts) Sentinel, 25 June 1881, p. 3.

... The show in the circus tent was in every respect firstclass. The greater part of the time there were three performances at the same time, and it was impossible for one person to follow them all. . . .

The show was patronized by many of the best people in the city, and the managers assured Chief Whitney that they have not seen so good order in any city that they have recently visited. Not a single accident was reported and the only pickpockets who attempted to operate came to grief, as will be seen by our police court report. . . .

To say that the success of the great show is in no small degree owing to the genial manners and indefatigable labors of the press agent, David S. Thomas, is only to state what every one at all familiar with the work of managing such a vast enterprise will cordially endorse. Mr. Thomas is known in every important newspaper office from London to San Francisco, and is sure of a pleasant reception in all of them. In a general conversation with Mr. Thomas he gave some interesting information as to the life of the principal performers. The somewhat prevalent notion that they are of loose habits he strongly combated and adduced some facts that supported his argument. There is not an intem-

perate man among them for the very good reason that their salaries depend upon their performance and that depends upon their physical condition which they are too wise to injure by the use of stimulants. The women of the company are well-behaved, modest and of good character. Nearly all are married and their husbands are connected with the troupe. Mr. Thomas therefore asserts with good reason that the claim of the circus to be a "moral show" is not an unfair one, and hence that it is worthy to receive, as it certainly does receive the hearty support of the best people in the community.

A Valuable Man, Fort Wayne (Indiana) Daily Gazette, 7 August 1881, p. 10.

Barnum, Bailey & Hutchinson have a clever assistant in D. S. Thomas, the press agent. The business of this gentleman is to make himself agreeable to the newspaper fraternity, and he does it. Every courtesy was shown the reporters of the city papers. They were conveyed to and from the show in carriages to the most eligible

location in the tent, both for seeing and hearing, reserved for them, and all the curiosities pointed out and explained to them by Mr. Thomas who insisted upon conducting his guests over the entire show outside and in. The press gang will not soon forget Mr. Thomas' courtesy. This sort of thing pays and the proprietors of the concern know it as well as anyone. However, as the show is a magnificent one, they are not compelled to curry favor by any display of obsequiousness. They are simply courteous gentlemen.

Because railroad circuses were able to travel so much farther overnight than their horse-drawn brethren, they were able to skip most small towns between bigger ones, and play a route composed of larger population centers. As the rail network grew, its branch lines reached formerly isolated towns and villages, connecting them to the larger world. Circuses were quick to see that they could expand their geographical reach and attract patrons from skipped-over locales by cutting deals with railroads in which a customer could buy a combined railroad and circus ticket. Called Excursion Tickets, they were a significant source of income. Matt Leland and the highly regarded Joe E. Warner were the Barnum show's Excursion Agents in 1881.

Local Matters, The Fitchburg (Massachusetts) Daily Sentinel, 25 June 1881, p. 3.

The Fitchburg railroad brought about 1200 passengers into the city to attend Barnum's show, and the Old Colony railroad about 1000. Conductor Carter's morning train from Worcester brought 381 passengers in two passenger cars and one smoking car. The Fitchburg railroad carried about 3500 passengers to the fair grounds during the day.

The following press release reveals the value of Barnum's name and reputation by exaggerating his influence on the show at the expense of Bailey and Hutchinson's contributions. They would not have had it any other way.

P. T. Barnum is Coming, The Summit County Beacon,

Akron, Ohio, 29 June 1881, p. 6.

"I'll write the songs of a nation and care not who makes its laws," says an eminent French writer, and Mr. P. T. Barnum with a refreshing bit of ingenuity changes the saying to read: "I'll furnish amusement to the whole world and care not who are its law-makers." There can be no question as to the great showman-Prince's claim to the first place in the hearts of his admiring countrymen as a dispenser of wholesome, innocent and enjoyable pastimes. He alone of all the many managers seems to keep apace with and even in advance of the exigency of the times. His long experience covering a full half century has taught him exactly what is needed to please and interest his millions of patrons and his unlimited financial resources furnish the all-potent power to carry out his every matured plan in a sort of stupendous way that confounds all other managers. The world moves and so does Barnum. Could he get hold of the new comet and confine it underneath his spacious tents, he would exhibit it, tail and all, and inculcate lessons in astronomy. No idea is too big for him and his young and active partners-no undertaking too audacious. In all reason the Barnum Show, or the brilliant and popular Great London Circus, were enough amusement for everybody when exhibited separately; but, now that they are consolidated and presented under one set of pavilions, for one admission, how tremendous they must be, to be sure. . . .

July began with eight days in towns along New York's Erie Canal, concluding with Buffalo on 9 July. This was lucrative territory as the show made \$45,785 [\$957,937] in its last week there with Syracuse being the winning town with revenue of \$9291 [\$194,391]. Three shows were given in Buffalo as well as at Watertown, New York on the 4th of July.

The show jumped from Buffalo to Detroit on a Sunday run, beginning eleven days in Michigan. Although three performances were given in Detroit on 11 July, Grand Rapids was the state's best town, bringing in \$10,007 [\$209,371]. The westward march continued with dates in Indiana and Illinois rounding out the month.

The company lost Advertising Car No. 3 near Niagara Falls in late June while billing for the 8 and 9 July engagements in Lockport and Buffalo, New York.

Circuses, New York Clipper, 9 July 1881, p. 258.

Fire.—An advertising car belonging to Barnum's Show was totally destroyed by fire early in the morning of June 29, near Stevensville, Canada. It is thought that sparks from the locomotive were blown through an open window upon the bills in the car. It was uncoupled from the train, and the fire was prevented from communicating with the coaches. F. A. Keeler and thirteen billposters escaped without injury, save that one of them was slightly burned. The car was 63 feet long, elegantly finished, and elaborately painted on the outside. It was owned by Barnum, Bailey & Hutchinson.

Forepaugh played five Illinois towns in July that Barnum would play in September. While we do not have evidence of opposition billing or paper covering from the Barnum advance, it likely occurred. We do know that Forepaugh placed readers in the papers disparaging Barnum. The following extracts from Quincy, Illinois are representative. They make many of the same accusations

and inferences brandished earlier in the year against Barnum: his show had changed name and ownership over the years, it was organized only for that season, Barnum sold his name to other showmen, he exaggerated his features, and he didn't even travel with the show. Forepaugh appeared there on 25 July while the Greatest Show on Earth arrived on 15 September.

For Everybody to Read. Adam Forepaugh Speaks, The Quincy (Illinois) Weekly Whig, 7 July 1881, p. 8.

The great Forepaugh show is now making its 17th annual tour of America. That it has during this long period of time been the leading and the largest tented exhibition on this continent the public know full well. My great show has never changed name or ownership during all the years it has been under my control. . . .

My show is not organized for a single season. It is created to exist, I trust in the providence of God, for many years; and I never have and never will resort to the abominable system of wholesale lying that appears to be so popular with other show proprietors. I have never traded upon my name, by selling it to others, as is the custom with some showmen. . . .

It don't (sic) advertise and it don't (sic) claim to have everything that the earth contains. It comes to you as the Great Forepaugh Show! The same name it has always borne—owned by the same man who has always owned it—and, my friends, in visiting the Great Forepaugh Show, you will see that it has kept abreast with the progressive spirit of the age.

He's "The Boss," The Quincy (Illinois) Daily Whig, 23 July 1881, p. 3.

. . . Adam Forepaugh is the sole owner and proprietor of his vast enterprise. He is worth \$8,000,000, or in other words more money than all other showmen in this country who conduct concerns under canvas; has no partners; has never made a combination with any other showman or set of showmen, as he regards all such in one of two ways, an evidence of weakness or a trick to deceive the unwary; has never bartered his name to others for a percentage or traded it for a consideration of any kind; is always with his own concern in person; does not go to Europe and have others carry his name around, making people believe that he is on the spot, when, in reality, he is thousands of miles away. None of those unworthy things has he over been guilty of. . . .Virtually every town on the route taxed circuses and other traveling shows. A good advance agent could save the circus many times his salary by negotiating the listed license fee, often giving more tickets to officials in return for a lower license. It was not unknown for circuses to play just outside the city limits if the license fee was An interesting aspect of the following account is that the Dispatch noted that the Mayor got a buck for each license, and that the "usual complement" of comp tickets was spread around city hall. Although we do not know how many tickets were distributed in Columbus, the cost of the licenses was not excessive.

The Columbus (Ohio) Dispatch, 22 July 1881, n. p. n. Barnum's advance agent appeared at the Mayor's office this morning and took out a license to exhibit the Great London Circus here on the 19th of August. The ordinance requires a license of \$25 [\$523] per day for the main show,

and \$5 [\$105] per day for every side show, and the Mayor receives a fee of \$1 [\$21] for each license issued. The city furnishes police protection. The agent left the usual complement of tickets for the officials.

Before government-generated identification, such as a driver's license or passport, became ubiquitous, scams took far less sophistication. The second half of the nineteenth century was a golden age for confidence men and women whose endeavors included misrepresenting themselves as circus attaches to cheat credulous victims. Nineteenth century newspapers contained many accounts such as the following, indicating that such schemes were widespread.

Circuses, New York Clipper, 23 July 1881, p. 290.

Bogus Circus-Agents Arrested.—A telegram from London, Ont., dated July 14, states that two persons giving the names of Henry and Ira Hall are under arrest for vagrancy and a suspicion of lar-

ceny. They claimed to be agents of Barnum's Circus, and tried to raise money from a number of hotel-keepers on a promise to locate the show in their neighborhood.

Circuses and newspapers had a complex relationship. Dependant on each other for revenue and publicity, the quality of a review often directly correlated with the amount of ad space the circus purchased. Conversely, editors of newspapers not receiving any or enough advertising often ran negative reviews. In this case, the editor of *The Quincy Daily Herald* apparently tried to blackmail John W. Hamilton by threatening to print an unflattering article about him if he "did not come up and 'see' him," which presumably meant a pay off in extensive advertising, free tickets, or even the extortionist's favorite, cash. Hamilton was in Quincy leading the opposition brigade for the Barnum show's 15 September appearance.

He wouldn't be bullied and the following unfavorable story appeared the next day. It may have been more than a co-incidence that the Forepaugh show ran a two column display ad for its 25 July date in Quincy just to the right of Hamilton's filleting, or that the *Herald's* editor knew so much about Forepaugh's difficulties in Bloomington in May.

Piqued, Hamilton responded in print the next day. This is one of the very few beefs with the press for which we have both sides of the story, thanks to Hamilton taking his case to the *New York Dramatic News*.

A Circus Man on His Muscle, The Quincy (Illinois) Daily Herald, 22 July 1881, p. 4.

Yesterday morning there arrived in the city an advance brigade of the Barnum show. The men according to the hotel register are in charge of J. W. Hamilton who calls himself "advance manager." The men under him number four or five and are lithographers and bill posters. Yesterday the brigade were engaged in putting up lithographs and judging from the appearance of the windows last evening they must have done good work. Between six and seven o'clock last



Another pair of tableau wagons was featured on this lithograph. Note Sawyer's Original Georgia Cabin Shouters on wagon at top and Scottish bagpipers at the bottom.Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

night Mr. Hamilton, the advance manager, was seated in front of the Quincy House taking his ease. One of his brigade, a spare young man, came up and imparted to him some information. Mr. Hamilton waxed wroth at the news, whatever it was. He fired up and launched forth abuse upon the young man's head. He called the young man a loafer and applied to him another epithet which wouldn't look well in print. The more he talked the madder he got and finally he doubled up his fist and struck the young man in the neck. The party assaulted made no resistance, but walked into the hotel office and sit (sic) down. Mr. Hamilton went up [the] street, and upon returning went into the office and heaped some more abuse upon the young man. He kept up that sort of thing for some time. The writer saw the assault and heard the language used by the advance manager. Several others who were in front of the hotel saw the blow struck and every one agreed in the opinion that it was an outrage, and there were some who wanted to see the assailant jerked to the police station to answer for his violation of the law. The young man who was assaulted stated afterward that he was sent to get flour with which to make paste. He was not given any money and did not get the flour. Because he could not get it he was abused as if he had been a dog. There was not a man who saw it who will not say that Mr. Hamilton acted the part of the bully. We made inquiries and found out that the young man had worked hard yesterday afternoon and did his work well. That he did not get a few sacks of flour without paying for then was not his fault. He was a subordinate, had done his work and was entitled to be treated as a man. The time has gone by when men can assault their fellow men for a trifling offense. Mr. Hamilton will probably yet learn that position does not give one authority to be a petty tyrant. Mr. Hamilton may be a man of consequence, but in the eyes of those who witnessed his brutal assault last evening he isn't as much of a man as the one he struck. We have written this because we think the occasion called for it. Had Mr. Hamilton been a citizen of Quincy he would have been arrested and fined. That he represents the Barnum show and abused a young man in his employ is no reason why he should have escaped the punishment his offense deserved. One thing more. The managers of the Barnum show can not afford to be represented by one who thus abuses his subordinates. Mr. Bailey and Jim Hutchinson, understood to be the owners, ought not to tolerate a man who will take advantage of his position to abuse one who is apparently friendless and cannot help himself. And we don't believe they will.

Barnum's Man Hamilton, The Quincy (Illinois) Daily Herald, 23 July 1881, p. 4.

Yesterday morning the Herald contained an account of the brutality (that's the only word by which it can be called) of J. W. Hamilton, who advertises himself on the hotel registers as "advance manager," toward a feeble looking young man under him and employed as a lithographer and bill poster. The article, which only stated the bare facts, seemed to worry the advance manager considerably. J. A. Bailey, one of the proprietors of the show, arrived yesterday morning, and it was noticed that Mr. Hamilton was anxious to be the first to read to him the Herald article. The two had a conference in a private room, after which Hamilton seemed to feel better. The party left for Jacksonville yesterday afternoon, and just as he was departing Mr. Hamilton gave to a Quincy bill poster the following to be handed to the Herald. We take pleasure in giving it room:

Dear Sir:—You may congratulate yourself on the fact that your paper enjoyed a circulation this morning of three extra copies more than usual because of your intellectual effort bearing on myself. I know of no other result. J. W. Hamilton, Barnum-London Shows.

The "advance manager," so-called, may congratulate himself that he was not arrested as he ought to have been, and fined as he would have been had his case come up before a magistrate. The assault, to speak mildly, was a brutal one, and had the facts been presented to a court in this city the man Hamilton would have fared badly. It is something unusual for a man representing a circus either as manager or agent to get into trouble. Nearly every circus in the country requires representatives to act gentlemanly on all occasions. Hamilton seems to be an exception to the rule. Not long ago at Bloomington, for his underhand work against Forepaugh, he got all his subordinates in jail. He took the train, left them, and went to Chicago where he was caught for his work at Bloomington. Through the backing of the Barnum show he got out, and the next heard of him was the playing of the bully in Quincy. The owners of the Barnum show may like that sort of thing. If they can afford it the Herald has no objection.

Hamilton had his turn a few weeks later in an article that shed considerable light on the relationship between newspapers and circuses. He also took a shot at Hugh Coyle, Forepaugh's agent, who sent out copies of the editor's attack on Hamilton to other shows. Not for nothing, Charles Day wrote of him: "Jack is fiery and pugnacious and never so happy as when engaged in a newspaper broil." The *New York Dramatic News* was less diplomatic: "Jack Hamilton would be a better fellow if he would curtail about a yard of his gall. Jack is beginning to imagine he owns the earth." 43

The Circus, New York Dramatic News, 6 August 1881, p.

Showmen have not been blackmailed this season by characterless newspapers and others to the same extent as in previous seasons, probably for the reason that the victims have made up their minds to not submit so tamely to the impositions practiced in former years. Charley Stow, agent for Sells Brothers, made a vigorous and determined stand against newspaper blackmailers in Bloomington, Ill., and Jack Hamilton did likewise the other day in Quincy, same State. Hamilton found it necessary to chastise one of his men, a contemptible loafer who tried to bully him, and the chastisement, which was thorough, was witnessed by a long-haired, cadaverous editor of the Quincy Herald, an alleged newspaper. The editor sent word by one of his friends the same night to Hamilton that he was going to give him a terrible "blast" the next day if he did not come up and "see" him. The invitation to do the latter was sent several times. Hamilton forwarded, by way of reply, that if the matter was of sufficient importance to print, it was the editor's duty to ascertain both sides of the story, and if he did not see fit to do that, he could his blackmailing sheet and hie him to a place where the degrees of heat figures up in the billions. In other words, he told the messenger to tell the supposed editor to "blast and be blanked." Sure enough, a third of a column of the vilest personal abuse appeared the following day. An indescribable agent called Hugh Coyle, of Forepaugh's show, industriously sent copies of the slander to other managers. This Coyle is young in the business and fresh as a daisy newly plucked. His whole ability seems to consist in getting his own sweet Celtic name in newspapers and marking copies, which he regularly sends to Coup and Bailey. This is his first season, and every one appears to think it will be his last.

Confirming the futility of entering into a dispute with anybody who bought ink by the gallon, the *Herald* editor had the last word. The Barnum Circus, not surprisingly, placed no advertising in the *Herald*, and the paper retaliated by publishing no readers and making no reference to the show. The only mention of circuses in the weeks before the 15 September date was a handful of short notices about injuries incurred by audience members at un-named circuses. The receipts in Quincy were terrible, \$2221 [\$46,469], the worst day of the season to that point. While *The Quincy Daily Whig*, the town's other paper, carried a number of readers and advertisements for the show, and printed a complimentary review afterwards, the only after notice from the *Herald* follows.

The Quincy (Illinois) Daily Herald, 16 September 1881, p. 4.

The next time Barnum's show comes to Quincy it will advertise in the Herald—and then it may have somebody turn out to see it. It cut its patronage right in two in Quincy by not advertising in the Herald. The show had very small audiences, indeed, and lost money heavily. All's well



Two of the most beautiful vehicles in the parade were the Neptune chariot and the Orchest-Melochor, shown here on an 1882 lithograph. Cincinnati Art Museum Collection.

that ends well. The Herald is content.

August began in Indianapolis with five more Indiana dates following. One of them was in Peru, where perhaps horse dealer B. E. Wallace was in attendance. The next week was in Ohio, and the week after that in Pennsylvania, West Virginia and back in Ohio. A three day stand began in Cincinnati on 22 August, after which came Dayton and Springfield, Ohio; and Richmond, Indiana. The month ended with a week in Chicago from 29 August to 3 September. Two of the year's best days were in Cleveland on 10 August with \$12,103 [\$253,225] and Pittsburgh on 15 August with \$12,618 [\$264,000]. The Pittsburgh receipts got Barnum's attention. Bowser noted in his diary on 17 August 1881 that his boss told him "Pittsburgh is the best show town this season, almost L7YYY," which, deciphered from Bowser's code, was \$13,000. As it turned out, Pittsburgh's gate was topped later in the year, but only once.

Early in the month the New York Dramatic News summed up the circus season to that point.

The Circus, New York Dramatic News, 6 August 1881, p. 5.

Sage managers, in conclave last Winter, predicted that this season would prove the most profitable for all shows of any in the history of the business. They were partly right and mostly wrong. . . . For one organization the season has been exceptionally brilliant, thus far, for others not so brilliant, and for still others not brilliant at all. The Barnum London Combination, as was expected from the undoubted drawing power of both shows, fairly swept the country East, and its success has continued since the West has been entered. The East is the bonanza country for large circuses, and all opposition having been scared off, the huge combination, ably managed as it has been, succeeded in doing a business that was phenomenal, as much as 14,000 being

taken in a single day. But from this out, when of necessity Barnum must take stands that have already been taken by Forepaugh, Coup. Sells and others, a smaller measure of success must result. Forepaugh, during the earlier part of the season, did not prosper to the same extent as last year, but recovered late on, and has been doing recently a very fine business. In the West he is particularly strong, and despite the opposition [John] Hamilton gave him in many of his stands, he will reap large returns. Coup permitted his general agent, "Andy" Haight, to jump him through the East before the snow was off the ground, and when ice was abundant; hence his triumphs in that section were not sufficiently signal to inflate to any noticeable degree his treasury. It was a frantic determination to get ahead of Barnum that hurried Coup along to Boston. He got ahead of Barnum, sure enough: he also beat time. Providence was the only stand taken where he did anything like a good business. It was the most ridiculous move that could

have been made. Coup this year has been unfortunate enough to be represented by some of the worst agents in the business, while he has one or two who aid his enterprise very effectively. He possesses and clings to one man in particular, a conceited, half crazy, empty headed, ignorant fellow, named [Frank J.] Pilling, whose sole object in travelling appears to be to write personals of himself for obscure country papers, and who has made, and is making more enemies for the show than there is any need of. A great deal of Coup's early ill luck may be attributed to the blunders of this curious individual. Since going West, however, the concern has done well, and bids fair to close the season with a good round sum on the right side of the ledger.

Forepaugh resurfaced with a twist in his negative advertising. Two weeks before his scheduled appearance in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, on 17 August, Forepaugh fired another shot. The Barnum show played Cedar Rapids on 30 September.

An Open Letter From the Great Showman, Adam Forepaugh, The Cedar Rapids (Iowa) Times, 4 August 1881, p. 2.

I desire to utter a word in regard to the practice of a would-be rival exhibition, which is putting out bills announcing its appearance "very soon," issuing complimentary tickets, of doubtful validity, contracting hotel, livery, printing and other bills with no certainly of their being paid "very soon."

This concern, whose advertised manager, is certainly notorious, if not famous, is frantic with rage, and overflowing with jealousy and avarice, because he cannot levy a contribution upon all sections of the country at the same time; because, forsooth, the Great Forepaugh Show is an older, better, larger, more widely known exhibition than the one which is baptized in his name; because the Great Forepaugh Show is everywhere attracting thousands upon thousands, and in order (as he mistakenly imagines) to injure me, he has resorted to the methods above named, and not content with such disreputable proceedings, his emissaries are daily defacing my bills, assaulting my

employees, and attempting to institute "comparisons" (?) between the concern bearing his name and my great show. Think of this, my friends, the originator and exhibitor of such arrant humbugs as the "Woolly Horse," the "Fejee Mermaid," Washington's body servant, "Joice Heth," Cardiff Giants, "Shaved Buffalos," and a long list of similar frauds, instituting "comparisons" between the Great Forepaugh Show and any other exhibition. Are not the motives of this "Prince of Humbugs," as he is everywhere known, most plainly discernible? . . .

I am sure no disreputable attacks of jealous rivals and least of all the assaults of America's "own and only Prince of Humbugs" cannot shake the unswerving faith of the amusement loving people in our land, one iota, in regard to the merit and magnitude of the Great Forepaugh Show.

To the press of this state and elsewhere, I would suggest that this trick of a jealous rival (in distributing bills in all localities where my great show is advertised in the papers, and by other methods, to appear on a sure day and date, that his exhibition is coming "very soon," when if it comes at all, it will be weeks after my show has come and gone), drives other exhibitions away, thereby entailing a loss of valuable advertising patronage to newspapers; as no circus manager desires to come in contact with a rival, if he can possibly avoid so doing; and the concern putting out bills "coming very soon," do not and will not advertise a line in any paper until a very short time before it appears. . . .

Early in the month the show had trouble with thieves and pickpockets in Indiana. While the circus put out press releases like the one below to reassure patrons that their homes would be safe during the parade, and their wallets on the circus lot. The criminals had a particularly busy day at Logansport on 4 August. From the notices in the *Fort Wayne Daily Gazette* on show day, 6 August, one would think the Mongol hordes were about to invade the town. This account is especially instructive in conveying a sense of the otherness, the danger, of show day. If the Barnum Circus, which had the most pristine reputation of any traveling amusement enterprise, generated this much anxiety, one can readily see why an undercurrent of antipathy was usually present on circus day.

Fort Wayne (Indiana) Daily Gazette, 3 August 1881, p. 9. Several of Pinkerton's detectives accompany Barnum's show. Thieves and thugs are scarce about this institution.

Antics of the Thieves, Daily Journal, Logansport, Indiana, 5 August 1881, p. 8.

Along with the show of yesterday came the usual gang of thieves and fakers who are wont to follow in the wake of every great traveling combination.

About 10 o'clock in the morning while the family of Frank Searle were (sic) watching the procession from the front of their house, thieves forced an entrance through a rear window and rummaged through the back rooms but secured little if anything of value. The visit of the light fingered gentlemen was not discovered until some time after they had taken their departure.

Shortly after ten o'clock, the residence of Andrew Prescott, at the corner of Ninth and Market streets was entered, probably by the same gang. No one was at home and the thieves were enabled to make a complete over-hauling of the house at their leisure. Here their efforts were

crowned with greatest success. They secured a watch, a fine Smith & Wesson revolver, some jewelry, money, and silverware valued in all at about \$75. Mr. Prescott states that the visit must have been paid very soon after he left the house, whence he went down town and deposited a goodly sum of money in the bank in anticipation of a visit from thieves.

Probably the most important event of the day in the thieving line was the experience of D. L. Dolson with a couple of thieving gang who attempted to rob his house. About 2 p. m. Mrs. W. H. Jacks, residing at the corner of North and Ninth streets, saw a couple of fellows enter the residence of Mr. Dolson, and immediately divined their purpose. She notified Mrs. D. E. Pryor who resides near by; Mrs. Pryor telephoned her husband at his drug store and Mr. Pryor telephoned Mr. Dolson at the Express office. Accompanied by J. B. Buzzard, Mr. D. drove hurriedly to his residence, and sending Buzzard to the rear of his dwelling, himself unlocked the house and entered by the front way, while he encountered two desperadoes face to face. Mr. Dolson was unarmed, but he gathered a chair and would have commenced to clear away right and left, but one of the thieves drew a revolver and ordered him to halt. A short parley ensued in which the thieves told that they had stolen nothing and were willing to give it up if they were let off. This proposition was declined. Opening a window one of the pair started to climb out when Buzzard struck him from the outside with a whip or club and drove him back. Mr. Dolson then told them that he was going to capture them and backing out he locked the thieves in. While Dolson and Buzzard were holding a short consultation on the outside as to how they should proceed, the pair emerged from a side door with drawn revolvers, and having declared that anyone attempting to stop them would be shot down they started away. The other party was unarmed and helpless. Having gotten about fifty feet away, the thieves broke into a run and, Dolson and Buzzard started in pursuit. The chase extended through alleys and over cross streets to the river's edge, where the fugitives jumped into a boat and pulled for the opposite side where they jumped ashore and ran off into the woods. A large party had by this time joined in the pursuit which was kept up as far as Camp Chase, where all traces were lost, and the chase was given up.

Fort Wayne (Indiana) Daily Gazette, 6 August 1881, p.

Five well known thieves are stopping at a cheap caravansary on Calhoun street. They are watched by the police.

The reporters have deposited their cash and diamonds in one of the banks until the departure of Barnum's show.

At Logansport, Thursday, the Barnum show exhibited. A gang of sneak thieves follow the circus and there were half a dozen robberies and no arrests. The police of this city, we hope will, if called upon, exhibit a better record than did the Logansport coppers.

Thieves attached to Barnum's show endeavored to rob passengers on Wabash train No. 4, last night. They very nearly succeeded in getting an old lady's boodle.

D. S. Thomas, the gentlemanly press agent of the Barnum show, arrived from Peru last night, where people were driven away from the tents with clubs.

A number of the thieves who follow the show arrived in



Barnum and London had two Fielding band chariots in its parade. This one started life on the L. B. Lent Circus, eventually made it to the Barnum show in 1876, and then was a stalwart in the 1881 consolidated show's parade. This picture was taken in 1888. Circus World Museum Collection.

the city last night. They were recognized on the train by Mr. Thomas, who insists that the public be warned of them. Though the proprietors of the circus make every endeavor to get rid of these scoundrels, they cannot prevent a few of them dogging the show.

People who come down town today should be careful to securely lock up their treasures and fasten doors and windows. Otherwise they may expect to miss their valuables when they return home.

The mayor has not ordered the appointing of special police to-day. He has instructed the chief, however, to have the night patrolmen visible as soon as possible. This morning, we opine, is the time when most of the depredations will be committed and the marshal and his deputies can not be everywhere.

In spite of the problems with the "light fingered gentry" as newspapers often called confidence men, pickpockets and thieves, the circus was a critical, if not a financial hit. The Logansport revenue was \$4787 [\$100,156], below the season's average, but enough to cover expenses with a little left over. As happened all season long, the Logansport review criticized the three ring format. The comment about the telephone wires referred to the former Howes Great London globe and elephant telescopic wagons that towered over the other parade vehicles.

The Circus, Daily Journal, Logansport, Indiana, 5 August 1881, p. 5.

The programme was rendered in three rings, thus giving at times three separate and distinct performances. This arrangement tended to shorten the time of the show. A better band than that which during the afternoon and evening discoursed sweet music in the main amphitheater, was probably never heard in this city. . . . The only objection urged to the show is that there is too much of it.

The hotels did a land office business yesterday.

The street corner hawkers made life miserable yesterday.

Some of the telephone wires were displaced yesterday by Barnum's high chariots.

The novel spectacle of a herd of elephants bathing was witnessed by a good sized audience below the Third street bridge last evening. The huge monsters scampered about and disported themselves like so many festive kids on the green. When it was time to bring the river exercise to a close, one of the largest elephants refused to come out of the water. The showmen secured a couple of boats and

gave chase. They pursued him across and above and below the bridge and finally drove him ashore where he was taken through a severe course of sprouts.

The Fort Wayne Daily Gazette did an excellent job of conveying the downside of circus day. These comments were the only ones discovered that record the presence of three card monte men around the show. It is also one of the few accounts to note that drunkenness was commonplace on circus lots. "Circus lemonade" was an oft-used euphemism for alcoholic drinks. The stories of the lost child and the couple's buggy tipping over were also typical of post-circus day reporting. The modern observer is surprised by the number of terrible incidents that occurred on the way to and from the circus. Nineteenth century newspapers were full of descriptions of people being robbed, shot, beaten up, stabbed, drowned, injured and even raped going to or coming from the circus. Often the bodily harm was self induced, usually from the ingestion of too much liquor. Usually the mayhem occurred on the way home from the evening performance. The chances of a violent death were far greater in 1881 than today. We live in a much safer time, even though few people think it is.

City News, Fort Wayne (Indiana) Daily Gazette, 7 August 1881, p. 10.

Yesterday was a remarkably quiet day.

The circus left for Toledo this morning.

Crowds of people visited the jail vesterday.

The three card men were around yesterday but suckers were not to be found.

Several individuals, most of them countrymen, succumbed to the influence of circus lemonade and other beverages more or less innocuous and were locked up. The number were, however, surprisingly few considering the

Wm. Sinclair a young Scotchman employed at C. L. Olds & Co.'s shops, was robbed of a hunting case watch, last night, at the circus. Sinclair values the ticker at \$35, and bemoans his loss much.

Deputy Marshals Myers and Patton, yesterday arrested

two suspicious fellows giving their names as Henry Dalton and Charles Rue. They were taken before Justice Pratt on a charge of vagrancy and fined \$11 each, in default of which they were sent to jail. These individuals were a part of the gang which infests the Barnum show.

Last night, a farmer named Walters, lost his child, a little girl aged five years, in the crowd at the circus. The girl let go of her father's hand and was soon swallowed up in the pushing, struggling mass of humanity. After an hour's search, a circus official named Watts discovered the little girl and restored her to her overjoyed parents who very properly rewarded the man.

A blacksmith at Olds' foundry, whose name we did not learn, together with his wife, rode in a carriage last night to the circus grounds. The drove of camels were (sic) in the river, and the uncouth animals frightened the horse, which caused him to careen and tip over the buggy, precipitating the man and his wife to the ground. The lady struck her back against a log and was severely bruised.

Detective Gallagher, of the Pinkerton detective force, accompanies the Barnum and London show. He pointed out numerous suspicious characters to our police, who watched them and prevented no doubt many depredations.

While the paper obviously didn't candy coat the experience of circus day, its review was insightful and judicious. The following is the best analysis of the public controversy, fueled by Forepaugh and Coup, whether Barnum was actively involved in the management of the circus bearing his name, or even an owner of it. This is one of the few after notices that mentioned the baby elephant that had been such a draw for Cooper and Bailey in 1880. Little Columbia had already used up her allotted fifteen minutes of Warholian fame the year before.

Barnum in Fort Wayne, Fort Wayne (Indiana) Daily Gazette, 7 August 1881, p. 9.

Such is the magic which attaches to Barnum's name that a show which bears his name is certain to draw largely. The name is a valuable trade mark and whether Barnum is in reality interested in the great show which exhibited here yesterday is of little moment. It is sufficient that the promises of the management were fulfilled to the letter and that the Barnum London show may be safely said to be the most gigantic tenting enterprise ever known in the history of the circus. Bailey and Hutchinson are two young men of energy and enterprise and as they have the active management of the show they are entitled to the credit.

Probably as large a crowd as ever assembled in this city on a circus day swarmed upon our streets yesterday. Of course a large majority of the visitors were ruralists, for whom no form of amusement has such delights as a tent show. . . .

The scenes upon a show day we have before depicted, and it is unnecessary to follow our country cousins in their meanderings hand in hand about the streets. The circus is the thing and the vast tents were crowded to their utmost capacity, both afternoon and evening. . . . We do not like the idea of three rings with as many acts going on therein simultaneously but with the quality of the entertainment no one can find fault. The Barnum show has many fine riders. Mme. Elise Dockrill, familiar to patrons of the Great London show, is retained, and certainly she is not excelled

in this country by any equestrienne. Mme. Dockrill, too, improves from season to season, and her riding is marked by a rare nerve and grace. Mme. Cordona, a handsome young woman, is a fair rider, and Miss Emma Lake's manege act we never saw excelled. Frank Melville is a young man who is rapidly pushing aside the claims to supremacy of [James] Robinson, [Charles] Fish et. al. Melville's business is new and daring, and this is sufficient to make his act more interesting than those of his ancient rivals, who rely on reputation already achieved, and are not inventive. The leaping of the two rivals for the championship, W. H. Batcheller and Frank Gardner, was an interesting feature. They are followed by a numerous train of minor satellites, all excellent leapers. The Lorellas, grotesque dancers who were several seasons with Herrmann, the magician, are the originators of the act copied by the Ronaldos who appeared at the Olympic some time ago. Some very clever jugglers are seen in their feats and the gymnastic portion of the entertainment is entrusted to such excellent hands as those of Hawley and Buisley, whose flying trapeze act is daring and very graceful, the French troupe Davene, a man and two females, no less excellent, the Boisset brothers, horizontal bar, Geyer and Ashton, parlor gymnasts, and Maggie Claire, formerly of the Claire sisters, whose act upon the flying rings is not approached by any performer. The clowns have little to do, as indeed they can not be heard to any great distance but they are certainly not offensive. The trained animal feature is superior to that of any other show.

The menagerie and curiosity department has great attractions, principal among which are General Tom Thumb and wife. Time has touched the tiny couple, but their levees draw as large crowds about the raised dais upon which they sit as in former years. Chang, the Chinese giant, is a giant, being over eight feet in height. The animals are all well kept and the variety is astonishing. A herd of twenty elephants is an unusual sight, and the sagacious beasts are all remarkably docile and intelligent. The "baby" elephant was especially attractive and mother and child were incessantly surrounded by a large crowd. The giant horse and oxen we can't say impress us with their size, but where all else is so excellent, it would be unkind to emit a growl here.

While the Barnum Circus's primary nemesis in 1881 was the Great Forepaugh Show, it also battled W. C. Coup's Colossal Show. A Coup reader from Columbus, Ohio in May probably referred to Barnum and London. Coup played Ohio's capital on 21 May while the Barnum show appeared there on 19 August.

Be Not Deceived, Columbus (Ohio) Daily Times, 19 May 1881, n. p. n.

The agents of Coup's Shows have discovered that certain persons are employed to misrepresent the movements of himself and his gigantic show. These guerillas go in advance of the Coup Show, arriving in towns where the hippodrome is to exhibit a few hours previous to the arrival of the company, and by all manner of ingenious subterfuges and trumped-up devices endeavor to mislead the general public into the belief that the show will not arrive, has been divided, that the employees have struck and the train has met with a breakdown, etc. Some of their apparently truth-

ful concoctions having a tendency to deceive unsuspicious patrons who, for the time, may be beguiled into believing the assertions of the cleverest (to deceive) outside employees of an unscrupulous opposition. Dates are changed, leading people to believe another show is coming soon. Beware of them. By no one, knowing Mr. Coup, or his reputation for straightforward, honorable dealings and truthful representations to the general public, will the improbable stories of these unprincipled rogues be credited. The great Coup show combined with Farini's Gigantic Paris Hippodrome, will certainly be here on the day and date advertised, and were there ten times as many hired detractors as are at present knowingly engaged in circulating misrepresenting canards of the great triple enterprise that appears here on the 21.

Coup issued a similar warning in June. His circus was scheduled for Davenport, Iowa on 2 July and Rock Island, Illinois on the 4th of July. Barnum and London played Davenport on 26 September and Rock Island on the 27th.

Five Hundred Dollars Reward, The Davenport (Iowa) Daily Gazette, 27 June 1881, p. 4.

Some envious showmen of a rival concern has maliciously and falsely caused to be published and advertised in Bloomington, Ill., that my New United Monster 4-Ring Show would exhibit in that city on July 4th. I never divide, and my three trains of 56 cars and the show altogether will be in ROCK ISLAND JULY 4th. I caution the public to beware of the many tricks to mislead you as to the town, day and date of my Monster 2 Shows which will be in Rock Island, Monday, July 4th. To bring these deceiving, dishonest and jealous showmen to justice, I offer a reward of five hundred dollars for the arrest and conviction of the person or party who caused to be circulated and advertised the false statement that my Mammoth Aggregations would be in Bloomington July 4th. In a while and altogether I will exhibit: Davenport, July 2nd; Rock Island, July 4th. Yours, W. C. Coup

In general, the closer the engagements, the more intense the warfare. A particularly well-documented encounter between the rivals occurred in Cleveland where Coup appeared on 6 August and Barnum on 10 August. The Barnum show fired the first volleys.

What A Fool! The Cleveland (Ohio) Herald, 30 July 1881, p. 8.

Anyone would be to pay fifty cents to see one unknown show when for the same sum by waiting four days, the four biggest and best known shows in the world can be seen. . . . Never mind the brazen effrontery of obscure showmen, whose conceit runs away with their brains. Barnum can no more afford to enter the field of vilification and billingsgate with these would-be prominent managers than could the New York Herald afford to indulge in controversy with the Pike City Slytight. There is just about as much glory in such a course for Barnum as there would be for the Herald. He knows, and everybody knows, that his shows are grander than all others in Europe or American, and that is sufficient. He is not going through the country making fame and fortune for the ragtag and bobtail of the profession by condescending to acknowledge them, and this it is that drives them wild with malice. Barnum will bring you more than even Barnum ever brought you before on Wednesday,

Aug. 10^{th} , and that is a fact you will remember. WAIT FOR HIM

Barnum Day! The Cleveland (Ohio) Herald, 1 August 1881, p. 8.



The other Fielding bandwagon started out on the Van Amburgh Menagerie in the 1860s, and came to Barnum and London via the Cooper and Bailey Circus. This picture was taken at William P. Hall's circus farm in Lancaster, Missouri about 1918, shortly before he sold the wagon to Rhoda Royal. Pfening Archives.

. . . The idea of a man claiming that he made Barnum when this same man depends for making himself on the one fact that he was once connected with Barnum, a fact that he never ceases to advertise! His proudest boast is that he was, at some remote day, permitted to be one of Barnum's partners! And now to help himself to a little notoriety he turns on the man that allowed him business association with him, whose name alone made him what money he has, and vilely abuses him. What kind of human nature is this? Oh, gratitude, how rare a quality it is! But Barnum smiles his scorn. The nips of such insects are not bites, they don't hurt. The public hates ingratitude and will condemn it, too. Barnum will have such a triumph here on August 10th as will set the seal of Cleveland's honest indignation on the base attempts of an unknown showman to revile one of the grandest names in the annals of our country.

Coup fired back. He must have had some inside information about Barnum's last year with the Flatfoots as his claim that the old showman made \$90,000 was only a bit higher than the actual figure. The \$40,000 guarantee was in the original 26 May 1880 contract, but not in the final version signed about 26 August. The charges of covering posters, postponing dates, and even the rumors of small pox are confirmed from other sources.

A Case of Jealousy, The Cleveland (Ohio) Herald, 2 August 1881, p. 5.

Last autumn, it is alleged, that a "marriage" contract was entered into between an old man in Bridgeport, Conn., aged seventy-five or more, and a young party who was at one time engaged in selling the "old man's" books at \$1.50 and a "ticket" thrown in. Contrary to the usual custom, in a case where a young person marries an old man, the minor gets a big bonus and a liberal endowment. This time, the

old man appears as the beneficiary, and demands ninety thousand dollars as a bonus and forty thousand dollars forfeiture if the marriage contract is not as fruitful as it was with a recently divorced set of wives! The old man claimed that his "name" was worth it. During his "marriage"(?) relations with the "flat foot party" last season, the old man claimed that his name had netted him \$90,000, and if the new "How's London" bride did not guarantee him that amount he wouldn't marry! The quasi brides, the "old man's" former book peddler and his confrere, having everything to gain, signed the bond and the nuptials took place. How to raise the money and save the forfeiture was the next important consideration. There was a brilliant young "wife" of the old man still living. This "wayward sister" had abandoned the old man after making him a fortune and insisted on a perpetual bill of divorce, which was effect in New York City in 1875.

Since that time she (?) has been in business for herself. She has not only made a double fortune but a great name. The "old man" had often sung "Come back! Come back! Thou art the solace of all my 'loves' and the maker of all my (Government) 'bonds!' come back to me, oh! Come back! Come back!" These were the plaintive cries of the old man, but she didn't come back! She had "set up shop" in the same business, and the trouble was her shop was the newest, biggest and the best, and was filled with all new and novel things, while the old shop of the newly "married" consisted of the "old stock on hand," which had been hawked in the markets of the country for years, introducing no new goods. They were to compete in the same field and the old man's "first love" had a monopoly of all the latest, most novel and unique fabrics. "Now," said the new brides (?) "that this former wife of the old man has got the best of us, both in the size of the store, the quantity, quality and novelty of goods, the only way we can hope to get even, pay this big bonus the old man demands, and save our \$40,000 forfeiture, too, we must cry 'Small pox,' postpone his dates, destroy his bills, take down or cover up his lithographs, get out wheeled bulletin board processions, a la negro minstrel and variety shows, and, if possible, break him up. We will get the old man out of his sick bed, and drag him to our shop, and hold him up, while he addresses our customers and make them believe he is always on hand each and every time we 'sell' the public!"

Of course this will be hard to do. He has not been to the "store" once since we "married" him, but then we will make the public believe he is coming—it is so easy to humbug the Americans now-a-days you know. While the sanguine young brides were thus colloquializing, lo, and behold a new comet makes its appearance in the sky, and dashes to pieces their fondest hopes. Before its radiant splendors the blushing maidens pale their ineffectual fires, and by Saturday next, August 6th, there will be visible in Cleveland to fifty thousand people the grandest Coup de barn'em ever witnessed.

The Barnum show brought out the heavy artillery when it announced that the great man himself would be in Cleveland under his own big top to address the audience about the "vulgar assaults of an ex-employee." On the same page, Coup ran an advertisement in which he depicted himself as a comet smashing into likenesses of

Barnum, Bailey and Hutchinson. Another illustration in the same ad showed Coup jauntily sitting atop a grandstand, underneath which were caricatures of the three partners. Hutchinson and Bailey's heads were affixed to the bodies of chickens while Barnum tried to climb out of a hole in the ground.

a hole in the ground.

August 10th, The Cleveland (Ohio) Herald, 2 August 1881, p. 8.

The four greatest shows in the world come to Cleveland, and P. T. Barnum in person will talk to the people and refute the slanders that the agents of an obscure showman have hurled at him. Everything old sold last winter, and everything new instead. . . .

The name of Barnum has always excited the envy and malignity of all other showmen, who tear their hair with mad jealousy when they recognize the impossibility of ever matching his brains or his enterprises. A great and pure name can always be assailed, but it never can be smeared or pulled down. Barnum, the one and only, comes to you in person, on Wednesday, August 10th, and will explain the animus that prompts the vulgar assaults of an ex-employee. Wait and hear him, and see at the same time the four greatest shows on earth for one price.

Coup responded to the news of Barnum's appearance in Cleveland two days later with a satirical letter.

The "Old Man's" Speech, The Cleveland (Ohio) Herald, 4 August 1881, p. 5.

The "old man" is announced to come if brought on a stretcher all the way from Bridgeport, Conn., to make a speech to his myriad friends in Cleveland, Saturday, August 6th. When led into the "ring" the reporters of the daily press will be called on to make a short-hand report, as follows:

My Friends and Fellow-Citizens: I am too feeble to talk much, but am glad to see you. I take pride in calling your attention to my show. I have no longer any desire to make money. When W. C. Coup, who I must acknowledge to be the most active, enterprising, energetic, indomitable, and the best natural showman in the world, was my partner and general manager, I was not compelled to come so far to look after financial affairs, for Coup took good care always to have a full exchequer. But now things have chanted. Those who have agreed to pay me \$90,000 for the use of my name and \$40,000 forfeiture if my new "spouse" don't make my profits equal that sum, can't afford to take the chances. I have Coup now in opposition. He has got a larger and a better show than this they call mine, and my partners are frightened. But excuse me; I am getting weak.

Remember, my object is not to make money. Those wishing to buy my book, called "Struggles and Triumphs," etc., will find my agents at the door as they pass out, who will furnish you with copies at \$1.50 and a ticket thrown in.

The *New York Dramatic News* noted that the battle of Cleveland was more than business as usual. Its prediction that both shows would do good business was right on the money, as it were.

New York Dramatic News, 13 August 1881, p. 3.

The war between Barnum and Coup was carried on with increased vigor the past week and every device imaginable resorted to that would in any way redound to the advantage of one and to the disadvantage of the other rival. Strolling bands of musicians have been called into requisition, horse

cars boarded up and pasted over with bills, and whole columns of advertisement, savoring of libels, published in daily papers. As a consequence, both shows have been well advertised and will likely do a large business.

Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between a genuine news story and a press agent's handiwork. This is the case with the following. While it appears creditable for a newspaper to comment on the gentility of Coup's opposition advertising, the absence of Barnum's name and cir-

cus is suspicious, as is the extensive detail about Coup's upcoming engagements in Pittsburgh and New York's Madison Square Garden. Further, the timing is a little too convenient, coming the day of Coup's appearance. Either way, the observations are of interest.

See, the Conquering Hero Comes, The Cleveland (Ohio) Herald, 6 August 1881, p. 8.

To-day our citizens will have an opportunity of seeing the man and his great show, who is at the present moment, the most popular young show manager in this country. The manner in which Coup's show has been advertised is certainly novel, unique, humorous and attractive. Never was an opposition between two contending parties carried on, especially by the agents of Mr. Coup's, with more of genuine humor, occasionally bordering on the satirical, than that which has

characterized it from the beginning. It is really a refreshing departure form the usual style adopted where more or less personality and vindictiveness is allowed to creep in. Mr. Coup's enterprise has won the sympathies, if not the admiration, of the public, and it will be patronized this afternoon and evening by such crowds as have rarely, if ever, been witnessed here before. The next stand is in Pittsburgh, where the same opposition is encountered and by the same party. It will be a proud day for the founder of the great Hippodrome building in New York to again re-enter that vast edifice with a show three times larger than ever, as Coup expects to do on the 5th of September next.

A stringer for a Fort Wayne, Indiana paper didn't think Coup's opposition tactics were so benign. Samuel L. Hurd, referred to below, married Barnum's daughter Helen in 1857. They divorced in 1871. In spite of losing his in-law status, he owned a small part of the Barnum-Circus from 1871 to 1875, and acted as his ex-father-in-law's representative on the show. When Barnum got sick in New York City in November 1880, he was taken to Hurd's home and stayed there until early January. While his association with Barnum suggests a better relationship than indicated below and casts doubt about his heading up a smear campaign against Barnum, such activity doubtless took place.

Fort Wayne (Indiana) Daily Gazette, 6 August 1881, p. 10.

Coup's circus is at Cleveland to-day. Hurd, one of the proprietors, by the way, is a son-in-law of Barnum and don't seem to possess a very filial respect for the old gentleman. He covers the dead walls of Cleveland with flaming manifestoes against Prince Phineas and cards the papers to the effect that Barnum is only interested in the show which bears his name to the extent of receiving \$90,000 for a season's use thereof, from Messrs. Bailey & Hutchinson, who Coup & Co. insists are actual owners of the show.



Colorful letterhead used during the 1881 season. Pfening Archives.

The great day finally arrived on 10 August when the Barnum and London Circus featuring P. T. Barnum himself appeared. Barnum got into town the afternoon of the 9th and set up shop in the Kennard Hotel. An interview in the *Cleveland Leader* that day was markedly undistinguished. He reminisced about his recent trip to England, and briefly discussed elephants, making the conspicuously insipid comment that "Elephants are the cutest and most sensible animals in a menagerie." Unlike virtually every other interview he gave in his life, there was no mention that his circus was in town that day.⁴⁴

The *Leader* also published a reader about the up town advance ticket sale.

Barnum's Show, Cleveland (Ohio) Leader, 10 August 1881, n. p. n.

episodes of show-day is the purchasing of tickets in the crowd. Mr. Merritt F. Young, the treasurer, handles, it is estimated, \$40,000 a week. Of course much of the ticket selling is done by assistants, but the immense revenues all pass through his hands, and counterfeit money is thrown aside with lightning rapidity. Mr. D. S. Thomas, the gentlemanly press agent, who is always studying the comforts of patrons, advises ladies, children and those who wish to

avoid the crowds around the wagons on the grounds to purchase tickets at J. W. Carson's Clothing House, 257 Superior street. The slight advance in price will richly repay the expenditure in the saving of trouble in passing free at the grounds.

The engagement was a terrific success. The admiring reviews noted the presence of customers from the hinterlands. As advertised, Barnum addressed the crowd.

Barnum's Show, Cleveland (Ohio) Herald, 12 August 1881, n. p. n.

Barnum's Show brought not less than 12,000 people. Some estimate the crowd at 15,000 and 20,000. Whatever the number the like was never seen before at a show in this city, and only once or twice has there ever been such a crowd here for anything. The parade was advertised to take place at 9 o'clock this forenoon, and an hour before that I saw people who had come fifty miles in buggies and wagons, and who were bent on seeing it all. Loads were here from Wellsville and Liverpool, and other towns on the Ohio river, and from way below Beaver and east of Mercer in Pennsylvania.

bered it more than twice over. . . .

During the performance Mr. Barnum entered the ring and returned thanks to the thousands present for their generous patronage. His remarks were loudly cheered. Notwithstanding the fact that much of the excellence of the show is due to the consolidation with Messrs. J. A. Bailey and J. L. Hutchinson, both of whom are managers of tact and ability, there is nothing more evident than that the people still regard Mr. Barnum as the greatest showman of the age. . . .

The troupe's financial records confirm this account of two big days in Pittsburgh. The show did \$12,618 [\$264,000] the first day, and \$8561 [\$179,118] the second as the duel with Coup continued.

Circuses, New York Clipper, 27 August 1881, p. 365.

Barnum's London Show appeared in Pittsburg (sic), Pa., Aug. 15, 16 and the following-up of the newspaper war with Coup in the columns of the local press created a furor. Our correspondent says: "The streets were crowded to witness the procession, and fully 15,000 people were present under the great canvas at the afternoon performance. In the evening about the same number collected, and two or three

> thousand were at both this and the remaining performances turned away, unable to gain admission. The menagerie was large and the best ever seen here, while the ring performance was above the average."

Electric lights on circuses were a popular novelty. By 1881 a number of shows had them, but the bloom was off the rose. According to the following report the Barnum show's light was the only one that worked, thanks to chief electrician M. E. Sherman, a Cooper and Bailey veteran who was in charge of the first electric light in outdoor show business on that circus in 1879. He even got his name and image on two posters.

The Circus, New York Dramatic News, 20 August 1881, p. 2.

The electric light is a failure with every show outside the Barnum-London. Somehow the other fellows can't get the knack of working it successfully. As a feature it is exhausted. In a great many respects, too, the old light is preferable.

On 21 August Bowser's diary had a fascinating entry: "Bailey & Hutch teleg[raph] P.T.B. as follows: Use every endeavor to trade November for April and telegraph us before closing, lose no time as agent must know at once. Coup is making elaborate preparation & must surely hurt our business, pay liberal bonus if necessary to change months, see what can be done about purchase. Bailey & Hutch." Evidently, Bailey, who ran the advance, had learned that W. C. Coup planned to route his circus into Texas in the fall where it would compete with the Barnum show which was scheduled to spend 17 October to 8 November in the state. Coup's presence obviously concerned Bailey and Hutchinson enough that they were willing to buy him off to stay out of the area. Although his partners wanted to sign off on anything Barnum negotiated before finalizing the agreement, they obviously had



Adelaide Cordona was one of the principal female riders, shown here as the "Empress of the Flaming Zone." Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

The circus brought with it a large number of pickpockets and confidence men, who made sad havoc with the unwary and confiding.

Barnum Draws the Crowd, Cleveland (Ohio) Leader, 11 August 1881, n. p. n.

... As soon as it [the parade] had passed out of sight en route to the grounds, the thousands of rural visitors made a rush for the tents, and by 2 o'clock the acres of seats were literally packed. The sale of tickets was stopped while yet a crowd of some thousands in extent remained outside, who were given the privilege of receiving their money at the wagons or deferring their visit till evening. The audience numbered between 13,000 and 14,000. In the evening it was even larger, again necessitating the closing of the doors before the performance began. The attendance at Coup's show was great, but it is probable that Barnum's outnumenough faith in his ability to encourage him to handle the situation. Bailey probably had not spent much time with Coup as they were never on the same circus together, but Hutchinson had trouped with him from 1871 to 1875 on the original Barnum show. Barnum and Coup were partners those five years, and had certainly developed a relationship.

Barnum's involvement in such a delicate matter gives lie to the idea that he was a passive partner. While he was often accused of not knowing much about circuses, he was universally recognized as a brilliant businessman and this was business. His partners' injunction to approach Coup about buying his circus is all the more remarkable. While Coup never came back into the fold, he didn't take his show into Texas that fall, opting for the Southeast. In 1882 his circus played the Lone Star state in July while the Barnum show never went south of the Ohio River.

Part of P. T. Barnum's genius was his positioning himself as a pillar of moral rectitude in a business dominated by vulgar, amoral charlatans such as John O'Brien. While the "Clergyman's Pass," as it was called by showmen, dated back to at least 1845, Barnum's efforts on winning over the church helped soften religious objections to field shows.

The Preachers and Barnum, Decatur (Illinois) Daily Republican, 27 August 1881, p. 3.

This morning Mr. H. C. Hedges, in charge of Barnum's advertising car, called at the Republican office to procure the names of all the ministers in Decatur, to each of whom he will send a complimentary circular settling forth in a condensed form the attractions of the great moral show, and giving each a pressing invitation to witness the exhibition on the 10th proxime (sic). Barnum never forgets the preachers and printers.

One of the big stands of the year was on the Chicago lakefront from 29 August to 3 September. It was an artistic and financial success, bringing \$47,473 [\$993,254] for the week. The circus got ample press coverage as the following shows. This was the last great week of the year as weekly income never exceeded \$29,000 [\$606,753] after that

Barnum's, Chicago (Illinois) Daily Tribune, 30 August 1881, p. 5.

... A noticeable feature was the excellent condition of the horses and the creditable appearance of the performers. All of the latter were attired in tasty new costumes, in striking contrast with the conventional faded and bespangled apparel. A commendable feature of the show is that the peanut and lemonade fake has been abandoned, the sale of these luxuries having been interdicted by the management. The only trace remaining of what used to be an infection of the first water is the sale of the clown's song-book and of tickets to a performance that follows the circus. It is impossible to give even a mention of the names of all the performers within the limit of a newspaper article, or of all the attractions. Suffice it to say that the Barnum London Consolidation is as complete as any show can be made.

Barnum's, The Chicago (Illinois) Inter Ocean, 1 September 1881, n. p. n.

There was a good deal of bustle and excitement at the

lake front yesterday afternoon and last night, and all on account of the presence there of the great London consolidation. People will go to the circus, no matter whether it necessitates a temporary fast to do so or not. Give a man fifty cents and tell him he can either procure a meal therewith or purchase a ticket to Barnum's circus, and the chances are nine to one the recipient will choose the latter course, and trust to luck for rations. There seems to be a sort of an irresistible magnetism about the tented show that attracts people thereto, and they go and look at the animals, many of which they have seen before, and also at the ring performances, which are usually about the same in all circuses, with some few exceptions as to originality, and Barnum may be classed foremost among those few. Persons who have just returned from a circus performance not unfrequently (sic) remark that that is the last show of the kind they will ever attend, for circuses, they say, like minstrel shows, are all alike. Yet, notwithstanding this apparently bold and resolute determination, these self-same parties may be found among the early ticket-buyers at the next circus which comes to town. So strong is the magnetism that resolutions are utterly inefficacious.

Barnum's, Chicago (Illinois) Daily Tribune, 1 September 1881, p. 3.

... The side-show was visited first, where the scribe was introduced to and chatted with all the human curiosities to be seen. [Isaac] Sprague, the living skeleton, complained, while lazily fanning himself, that he felt the heat more with his forty-six pounds of skin and bone than did his daughter Ella, a pert little miss weighing 230, who stood near by, looking the very perfection of comfort and jollity. Before passing on to the seven-foot-high Zulu boy, [Dave] Thomas pointed to a glass case with the observation: "There's the original Feejee mermaid with which Barnum humbugged the people of New York so many years ago—it's a curiosity from that fact alone;" and then, pointing to the aged leader of the Indian band, he said: "We don't advertise it, but that is old Deerfoot who made such a wonderful record as a runner in England when he was in his prime."

The flaxen-haired Albino girls gracefully acknowledged an introduction, and so did Illawarra, the bushy-headed octoroon, who stood beside her colored sister with a beard. They tell the story about Illawarra that she is devoutly religious, and firmly believes that the President [James A. Garfield] will recover because she has prayed for him.

While the visitor and his guide were talking with the armless man and the one with an eight-foot-long beard, the former reached out with his right foot and nipped Thomas' walking-stick, which was held between the toes as if by a vise.

Nearly an hour had slipped away before the attractions of the side-show were abandoned for the larger tents. The dressing tent was entered next. It is almost large enough for an ordinary circus. To tell all that was seen going on there would required unlimited space. In the area were scores of horses, here and there a trick elephant or other animal, gaudily-attired performers, banners, carpets, flags, jugglers' appliances, ladders, and, in fact, all that is to be seen in the three rings during the evening was in a general but orderly mass. In the gentlemen's dressing-room the visitor saw acrobats, gymnasts, clowns, contortionists, wrestlers, and

riders deep in the mysteries of getting inside of tights and spangles and other unheard-of contrivances. In the ladies' dressing-room the visitor saw—nothing, because he was not allowed to enter. He waited, nevertheless, to be formally presented to a number of the lady performers, who chatted away in such an easy and entertaining manner as almost to make the visitor believe himself in a drawing-

menagerie and museum. How much could be said of the many stories told by Thomas about the purchase of the different animals and prices paid! No one knows what a stupendous undertaking it is to organize a menagerie until one learns that the occupant of a single cage costs perhaps \$15,000, while salaries of performers vary from \$50 to \$450 a week.

Chang, the Chinese giant, talked to the visitor in tolerably good English, exhibited with pride his finely embroidered attire—the work, he said, of his girl in the Old Country-and shook his fist at a boy who called out to him," "Hello, washee-washee.'

Gen. Tom Thumb and his wife each piped a cordial welcome, and the little lady exhibited the famous miniature watch, shaped like a leaf and was presented to her by friends when her mar- 4LARGEST SHOWS. riage to the General was celebrated.

The number of people employed in the "Great Consolidated" is 630, while the horses number 310, total daily expenses averaging \$4500. As Thomas was leaving the grounds after the show was over he directed attention to the man who was shrieking out the wonders to be seen in the side-show and said: "He gets \$75 a week just for talking that way two or three times a day."

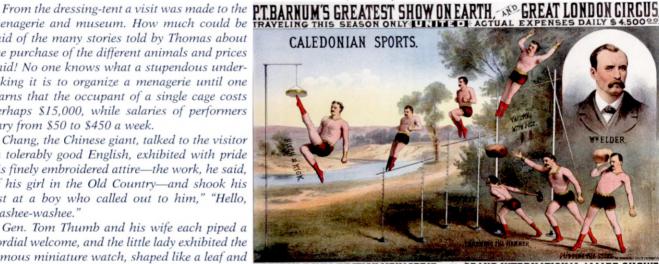
Interviews with animal men were a staple of circus journalism. Elephant boss George Arstingstall was one of the best ever in his profession. William Newman, his assistant and eventual successor, became famous the next spring for going to England to fetch Jumbo. Arstingstall's comment that, "Elephants are very treacherous," reflected the prevailing professional wisdom of the day. No softhearted anthropomorphizing for him. While he was probably correct in saying there were sixty elephants in the United States and that the price of them had come down in recent years, he was far too high in stating their value. He must have been trying to impress the reporter.

Barnum's Pets, The Chicago Inter Ocean, 1 September 1881, n. p. n.

... Mr. George Arstingstall is the authority in B., B. & H's Circus. He is a good-looking man in the scarlet and white hunting suit who puts the herd of twenty elephants through their tricks. Half his life has been passed among elephants, and he is as much "at home" with the monsters as an old maid is with her cats. There is no need here to say what George makes his pets do in the arena for everybody blessed with the necessary coin has been or will be there.

ELEPHANTINE EXPERIENCES

It is not an every-day experience, though, even among circusmen, to find such well-drilled elephants, to see them march single or double-file, wheel and "right-about-face" in fine military style at the word of command. And the little fellows-who are commanded by William Newman, George's lieutenant—are a source of delight to the young folks from the time they begin to stand on their heads or grind that wheezy old barrel-organ until the end, when, carried in triumph on the necks of two monsters, they pass out of the amphitheater.



with diamond and emerald adornments, that SANGER'S ROYAL BRITISH MENAGERIE AND GRAND INTERNATIONAL ALLIED SHOWS.

William Elder's display of Cadedonian sports appeared along side wrestlers and an iron jaw act in the program. Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

Within the roped enclosures, where each elephant is tethered by an iron bracelet and chain, Mr. Arstingstall gave the man of notes some of his elephantine experiences. He does not have a very high opinion of the moral character of his quadrupeds. "Elephants are very treacherous," he says, "you can't rely on them." Like human beings, they differ in disposition. Some are kind and good-natured; others cross and obstinate.

"Here is a friendly sort of a fellow," he remarked, walking up to a living hill of flesh; "Chieftain, come and kiss me!" and thereupon the fellow threw his trunk upward over his huge head, and bending down his mouth gave George such a kiss as would have made Emma Abbott turn green with envy. "But there's no accounting for taste," quoted the reporter, sotto voce, and a man who kisses elephants must have a good-sized appetite for osculation. However, Chieftain has a kind eye and a very taking manner (with his trunk), especially when the children have gifts of cake or peanuts to bestow.

"There's another Chieftain in ——'s circus," said Mr. A., "that I had a little fight with. It appears that on a railroad journey Arstingstall was locked in a car with two elephants and two dromedaries. During the night Chieftain was feeling "ugly" and had a fit of colic (which is apt to make a biped feel cross).

A BIG DRINK

The keeper sent out for two buckets of whisky, which Chieftain took down readily to the improvement of his colic but not of his temper, and he soon after showed fight.

"Did you prepare to crawl out?" asked the reporter.

"No; that would mean death," said George. "I took my stick and conquered him. That was the brute that killed King, his keeper, last winter."

Passing to the middle of the tent was Hebe, the mother, a kindly elephant, aged 28 years, and her baby Columbia, 18 months old, and not yet weaned. No human mother is fonder of her offspring than Hebe is of her young American, and the youngster fully reciprocates the maternal fondness. It is amusing to see Columbia when somebody has given her mother a few peanuts or a cake pop her tiny trunk into Hebe's mouth, and steal the dessert before it has disappeared down the big red cavity.

Albert, the Ceylon elephant, is the largest and wickedest of the herd. One night, at Cleveland [on 10 August], he picked up a big stone and hurled it at [Frank] Hyatt, the assistant manager, severely bruising his leg. The man took up the stone and threw it with all his might at Albert, hitting him between the eyes, making a little bump. Thereupon the brute wanted to continue the fight, but the man got out of the way, but whenever, during the evening, Mr. Hyatt approached the swinging of his adversary's trunk showed he was ready and willing to recommence hostilities.

BATHING SCENES

One night, at Auburn, N. Y., after the performance, the elephants were taken down to the river for a bath (they are fond of water as little boys), and here Albert became ugly; he got into midstream, and neither threats nor coaxing could get him out. He just stayed bathing till near midnight and then, feeling sleepy, no doubt, quietly went back to the circus. Mrs. Arstingstall says the elephants are not mindful of the kindness shown to them (as some of the story-books pretend). They are cunning and treacherous and only amendable to fear.

As illustrating their cunning he stated that sometimes elephants which have thoroughly learned to do tricks will back down and become stupid and obstinate before an audience. They know that there and then the trainer will not punish them.

"The natural history writers say that an elephant won't go over a bridge unless he is sure it will bear his weight, but it is all nonsense," said George, "I can drive an elephant wherever I want him to go."

"It costs considerable to maintain twenty elephants, doesn't it?"

"Yes," said Mr. A., "there are nine men to help me take care of them. Then they eat 2800 pounds of hay and twenty bushels of oats daily, to say nothing of bran-mash and such delicacies."

"What is an elephant worth?"

"That all depends upon his training and education. I have seen those five big ones sold at auction on two different occasions. Once they fetched \$80,000, and at another time \$110,000. They are cheaper within the last few years, for there are more of them in the country."

"How many do you think?"

"I calculate there are about sixty altogether in the United States"

After Chicago the troupe played through Illinois to St. Louis. On the way into Springfield, Illinois on 9 September the show train was involved in a wreck when the sec-

ond section ran into the one ahead. Bowser's diary for 10 September noted that the show did not arrive in Springfield until 6:00 p. m., much too late to exhibit that evening. The company went straight to Decatur, Illinois, the scheduled stop on 10 September.

A Peep in Advance, Decatur (Illinois) Daily Republican, 10 September 1881, p. 3.

The following telegram gives the particulars of the annoying accident which visited the Barnum show near Atlanta, Ill., on yesterday morning. In consequence of the smash the outfit was unable to reach Springfield in time, and no performance was given there yesterday, the advance expenses there being a deal loss:

Atlanta, Sept. 9.—A bad smash up occurred at Lawndale, four miles south of here, at four o'clock this morning, caused by one of Barnum's trains running into the rear of the front train, while on their way to Springfield on the C. & A. road. The two trains left Bloomington last night between one and two o'clock, the first being run by Conductor Souther, the second by Conductor Doonan. As Souther's train was going into Lawndale it stopped to take water, and was struck by Doonan's train, doing great damage to the sleeping car and several others cars, besides the engine, No. 195, which ran into the cars. The accident happened at a curve, and the train men on the last train could not see the one ahead. Four of Barnum's cars were partially telescoped. Frank Melville, wife and child, the Chinese Giant, Tom Thumb and wife, were in one of the cars that were most damaged. They were wedged and fast between two other cars, and to make the situation the more terrible, the caboose, which had been thrown on top of the rear engine, took fire and was completely destroyed, and threatened to burn all of Barnum's damaged cars containing a number of actors, before they could be extricated. The cry went out for water, which could not possibly have been obtained in quantity near by for some time. At such a critical moment it was Mr. Sacket, connected with the show, who had foresight enough to see that the cars must be separated, and the engines finally succeeded in getting the cars far enough apart for the actors to escape, there being no one seriously hurt. The fault was with the switchman at Lawndale, who neglected to flag the train.

The Circus, New York Dramatic News, 24 September 1881, p. 8.

The accident that the Barnum train met with outside Springfield, Ill., lately, was not much discussed because nobody was slaughtered; nevertheless, it was a pretty serious affair. The sleeping car damaged the most was burned by the railroad officials where the mishap occurred, a fashion in vogue with the barbarians of the West when they want to hide evidences of the carelessness or stupidity of their employees.

Decatur, Illinois was just another day at the office for the circus. In spite of rain in the afternoon, the show did fair business, ending up with \$5022 [\$105,073] for the day. For Decaturites it was one of the most exciting days of the year, one that many would remember for the rest of their lives. The local newspapers did a good job chronicling the wonderful event. They noted a number of aspects of the circus business overlooked by other papers: the company's excellent organization and efficiency, the

fate of those charged with public intoxication, the absence of vulgarity and ancient clown jokes, the benefit to local businesses, and fights between show and town folk.

The concert was condemned as it was almost everywhere. Ed Kohl, another Cooper and Bailey alum, was in charge of it. With one exception, it offered typical after show fare including clog, Scottish and Irish dancing; roller skating; a comic; Prof. Sawyer's Jubilee Singers; and a Humpty Dumpty pantomime. The concert roster was made up for the most part of big show artists mak-

chariots, the wagons, the cages and all the furnishings were of the very best character. The same can be said of his exhibitions under the canvass. There were fewer stale jokes from the clowns, comparatively nothing suggestive of vulgarity. Barnum's is nearer an ideal show this year than ever before. The concert, an afterpiece, is an exception to this. It was thin, very thin, but to the credit of the managers they made very little blow about it during the regular performance. In the evening about 2500 remained for this, at "the small sum of ten cents apiece."

Local Chimes, The Decatur (Illinois) Daily Review, 12
September 1881, p. 4.

Barnum's street parade was a good deal more than immense.

All our hotels and eating houses had their ability to entertain taxed to their utmost on Saturday.

Children in arms were plenty on the streets on Saturday, and those who had them in charge put in a hard day's work in caring for them.

Several special policemen were on duty on Saturday, some of whom were old hands at the business, and yielded the billy as natural as could be

People thinned out wonderfully quick on Saturday after the show had passed, and they flocked to the show ground to see the free exhibition.

A gentleman from Long Creek expressed the opinion on Saturday

ALALLIED SHOWS. that fully two-thirds of the people of the EST SHOWS. that township were in the city on that

Express wagons converted into hacks did an immense business Saturday in transferring people to and from the show ground, indeed it was a regular harvest for them.

Tom Thumb and lady, Chang the eight feet giant were guests at the New Deming over Sunday. They were the two extremes of Barnum's show, and they leave for Peoria this morning.

Farmers' teams with wagon loads of people were coming from all directions at day dawn on Saturday morning, and before seven o'clock, the sidewalks of the city were crowded with people.

Pedestrians needed to look out for their toes on Saturday, to prevent them from being mashed by the foot fall of the crowd. People were obliged to elbow their way along, and then they could only get along at snails pace.

It is remarkable what organization and system will do in the accomplishment of a great amount of labor in a short time. This is shown in the management of Barnum's show. It was but a few minutes after the evening performance till all the tents and fixtures were down and loaded on wagons. The work of putting these wagons on the cars was also speedily done, and without any noise or confusion. Every boss, driver, employee, and even the horses, appeared to know exactly what was to be done, and just when to do it.

Too Much Show, The Decatur (Illinois) Daily Review, 12 September 1881, p. 4.



The Golden Organ of Vienna had a poster to itself in 1881. Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

ing a couple of extra bucks. They included two of the acrobatic Boisset brothers, leaper John Batcheller, and rider William Dutton. The unusual feature of the performance was "the Human Projectile thrown from the Ancient Catapault (sic)." Prof. Hawley, one of the daring young men on the flying trapeze, was listed as the superintendent of the device; he may have owned it. The unfortunate Elizabeth Davene met her maker as a result of an accident on the catapult on 3 May. She was succeeded by Harry Carrey who got the credit line in the route book.

The Greatest Show on Earth, The Decatur (Illinois) Daily Review, 12 September 1881, p. 4.

The crowd in the city on Saturday indicated that the people took the advice to "wait for Barnum." They came on the trains, in wagons, on horse back and on foot. They came early and staid all day, and many of them into, and some through, the night. Barnum is generally spoken of as "the prince of humbugs," yet the people show by their flocking to see his entertainments that they like his style of hoodwinking the public.

The morning parade was a matter of special remark of out spoken praise. There was very little tawdry foolishness connected with it. The horses and their equipments, the Some eight or ten persons who imbibed too much of the show on Saturday were lodged in the calaboose over Sunday. This morning they will all interview our squires, where they will learn what their extra amount of show is worth. The police found several other countrymen in the course of the afternoon who were in a fair way to get in the same fix, who they persuaded to start for home while they could yet keep on their feet.

Barnum and Business, Decatur (Illinois) Daily Republican, 12 September 1881, p. 3.

Another immense crowd of city and country people took in the Barnum show Saturday evening. The rain of the afternoon was more than some people could stand and they went home before the performance in the muddy rings had fairly begun. There was no rain nor splashing mud at night, and though the programme was cut, the entertainment gave general satisfaction. There were too many performances going on at once to suit the crowd, and complaints were numerous, particularly among the small boys, who tried their best to see everything, but couldn't. The menagerie was the largest and finest ever shown in Decatur.

In this connection it is not inappropriate to speak of the business done in Decatur on Barnum day. People flocked to the city from points 20, 30 and even 40 miles distant, and as early as five o'clock in the morning the streets began to fill up with strangers—some farmers seldom seen here. At noon it was next to impossible for townsfolk to pass along the streets with any degree of speed or comfort. The hotels, restaurants and boarding houses were full to overflowing, while the merchants never had so good a day for business. The cash receipts of one firm was (sic) over \$200, and they might have increased their sales \$1000 had there been clerks enough. The amber liquid flowed freely, one liquor dealer taking in over \$800 during the day. There is no doubt about it, Saturday was a boss day for the Decatur business man, and while Barnum took a good-sized lump of money out of the town, still Decatur is ahead so far as the cash is concerned.

While the Barnum outfit was being loaded on the two special trains near the Union deport, Saturday night, there were brawls and fights without number. The show men tackled a crowd of Decatur and country roughs and shook them up lively, and then the boys got to fighting among themselves. Bruised faces and swollen hands could be seen on the streets Sunday by a close observer.

Gen. Tom Thumb got shaved at Fred Norman's on Sunday forenoon. The General was rather dignified, and satback waiting his turn, smoking a fine cigar complacently the while.

While the show was in Burlington, Iowa on 14 September Elise and Richard Dockrill learned of the death of their daughter. Trouper that she was, Mrs. Dockrill performed her Roman riding act a half hour after she heard the terrible news.

A Green-Room Scene. The Quincy (Illinois) Daily Whig, 15 September 1881, p. 2.

Passing around to the rear of the great Barnum circus tent, we visited the green-room, that mystic region behind the scenes. Everything was quiet, almost silent. The sound of the orchestra beyond came faintly to us, intermingled with the murmur of the multitude, and save the prattling of



Mattie Jackson was a menege rider in 1881. She is depicted here in an 1882 lithograph. Cincinnati Art Museum Collection.

a little child, who was toddling around among the huge elephants and playing with their trunks as if they were kittens. no sound, no voice was heard. We asked our conductor the reason of this solitude in the midst of such bustle and animation, and were ourselves hushed into respectful sympathetic silence by his answer. The quiet was preserved out of respect to the grief of Madame Dockrill. A telegraph had arrived but half an hour before she entered the ring, in her matchless equestrian act, telling in fearful brevity of the death of her little daughter Elisa, from diphtheria, at her home in New York. The poor woman was heart broken, and her eyes were so swollen and blinded with tears that she could only by means of the greatest fortitude and most forced composure accomplish her part. It was done, however and nobly done, but none of the applauding thousands thought or imagined that beneath that glittering costume whirling with such giddy speed around the course, beat a mother's breaking heart that throbbed with deepest woe for the beloved dead she could never see again.—Burlington Hawkeye.

The City Council of Jerseyville, Illinois waived the license fee for the outfit on 16 September in honor of James L. Hutchinson, a local boy who made good. The newspaper advertising for this date was illustrated with only an image of Hutchinson, excluding Barnum and Bailey. Even with the local connection, business was poor, only \$2661 [\$55,675]. not enough to make the nut.

Alton (Illinois) Daily Telegraph, 17 September 1881, p. 2. The Jerseyville [Illinois] City Council gave Barnum's show a free license, as a compliment to one of the proprietors, "Shorty Hutchinson," who is a Jerseyville boy.

The last big opposition battle between Barnum and Forepaugh occurred in St. Louis where Forepaugh appeared from 5 to 9 September and Barnum from 19 to 24 September. Besides the opposition tactics noted below, while the Barnum show was in Chicago on 29 August, it dispatched the steam calliope, steam organ and bell wagon to St. Louis "to buck against the Forepaugh

Show",45

A *New York Clipper* correspondent wrote that Barnum did "an immense business" in St. Louis. That comment must have come as news to show executives as the income for the six day stand varied between a slightly above average \$6432 [\$134,574] and a paltry \$2597 [\$54,336]. In comparison, during the Boston engagement in early June the worst day was only \$168 lower than St. Louis's best with all other days topping the Forest City's biggest day. Forepaugh's billing must have had an effect. While we have no record of Forepaugh's revenues, the big winner was clearly the printing houses that supplied advertising to both shows.

Circuses, New York Clipper, 3 September 1881, p. 383.

BY THE GREAT LONDON CIRCUS COMBINED WITH

MEELISE DOCKRILL:

THIPPODROME, I WING CHROSTHIS I

TUNING SHOULD BE THE COMBINED WITH

TO HAVE BEEN BOOK AND THE HARD SHOULD BE THE WORLD SHOULD BE THE COMBINED BUT HAVE BEEN BOOK AND THE HARD SHOULD BE THE COMBINED BUT HAVE BEEN BOOK AND THE HARD SHOULD BE THE COMBINED BUT HAVE BEEN BOOK AND THE HARD SHOULD BE THE COMBINED BUT HAVE BEEN BOOK AND THE HARD SHOULD BE THE COMBINED BUT HAVE BUT HAVE BEEN BOOK AND THE HARD BEEN B

Elise Dockrill was called the "undisputed greatest lady equestrienne in the world" in this 1882 poster. The paper hoops she jumped through in the upper left were always called balloons. Cincinnati Art Museum Collection.

Circus Competition in St. Louis, Mo.—Forepaugh's bills make a fine display, says our correspondent, "in all parts of the city, and expectation is on tiptoe to see the grand streetparade, which takes place, Sept. 5, when the show opens at Nineteenth and Olive streets. Col. R. S. Dingess, who had been here for a week, has departed, leaving Fred Lawrence, the press-agent, to look after matters. The advertising cars attracted considerable attention at the Union Depot, and we learn that Mr. Forepaugh has just purchased a new one from the grocery-house of McVeigh & Co. of Chicago, who had fitted it up at an expense of \$14,000 for their drummers; but the car was too handsome to keep or too expensive to run, so McVeigh & Co. sold it to Forepaugh, and he is having it repainted to use this Fall. Barnum's advanceagents are billing a month in advance of their opening, and are suspending across the principal streets banners bearing the words: 'Wait for Barnum and the London Shows, Sept. 19.' This business rivalry is a good thing for printers and billposters, as the Globe-Democrat Printing Company has gone to several thousand dollars' worth of expense in putting up new fences and sign-boards in all parts of the city."

The Circus War, St. Louis (Missouri) Post Dispatch, 9 September 1881, p. 5.

The bitterness with which Forepaugh and Barnum have waged war against each other in this city, where the battle of advertisements was but a repetition of similar conflicts had in fields east of here, may be best illustrated by a few figures, which a Post Dispatch reporter obtained to-day. Until the recent contest was inaugurated here, the largest quantity of posters put upon the walls by any single circus

organization was about 18,000 sheets, which the great London show hung on the outer walls two years ago. The average number of bills put out by a show is between 8000 and 10,000. Now the bill boards of the city are covered with 45,000 sheets of colored posters, 22,000 of which were advertisements for Forepaugh, and the remaining 23,000 glorifications of Barnum and his attractions. To say nothing of the original cost of the paper and printing, the posting of the bills has cost the rival showmen small fortunes, Cottrill raking in at least \$4000 for the paste and labor he has furnished. Besides this, both Barnum and Forepaugh have flung painted banners to the breezes, and millions of quarter sheets, dodgers and various other devices, that kept the Times Printing Company's presses going night and day for weeks, have filled the streets like Valiambrosian leaves. The painting of his banners alone cost Barnum \$600, and Forepaugh expended an equal amount in this manner. Of course the newspaper advertising bills were also enor-

mous. A gentleman who pretends to know all about it says that the two shows have spent at least \$16,000 in keeping themselves before the public in the past few weeks. And Barnum is not through yet. He has 7000 more sheets to post, any number of small sheets to distribute and the newspapers to satisfy. The war has been a bonanza for some fields. It has greatly increased the bill-board space of the city, over 150,000 feet of lumber having been put up for this purpose at the beginning of the conflict. So bright were the prospects, indeed, that Hon. Thos. Allen, Congressman from the Second District, went into the bill-posting business himself and is now one of the battling heroes in the already famous bill-posters war. The theaters alone put out 18,000 sheets of bills a week, and this, added to the 45,000 belonging to the circuses, and the sum total multiplied by three cents per sheet, makes a handsome little sum which it is worth while laying aside statesmanship to strive for.

The leaping literally reached new heights in St. Louis. On 21 September the show claimed that a world's record was set when William Batcheller and Frank Gardner both did double somersaults over eighteen elephants, five of whom were on four foot high pedestals and a fifth on one five feet high. Supposedly, they cleared the pachyderms

by five feet. The next day John Batcheller also accomplished the feat. 47

On 21 September Bowser wrote in his diary: "Letter from Mr. Barnum, St. Louis, Sunday 18th. No money to be expected from show bal. of season. Last week the worst of season." The swing through downstate Illinois that week was a disaster, bringing in only \$20,467 [\$428,221].

After St. Louis, the outfit played Iowa and Illinois to finish the month. Things got worse. Income during four of the eight remaining weeks of the season was under \$20,000, although in three of them the circus performed only five days. With one exception the show took in at least \$30,000 [\$627,675] per week for the first twentythree weeks of the season with the sub-par week missing that threshold by a miniscule \$10. During the last ten weeks of the tour the best week was the St. Louis stand beginning on 19 September where revenue totaled \$28,991 [\$606,564]. The only bright spot during the remainder of the itinerary was St. Joseph, Missouri on 10 October. The best day of the season, the treasury increased by \$14,905 [\$311,850]. Billy Allee, the pioneer collector of circusiana, was among the multitudes that day, doubtless gathering up all the ephemera he could.

The smallest weekly total was \$15,440 [\$323,043] for the six days starting 26 September in Iowa and Illinois. In large measure the low revenue resulted from the show giving only a night show at Davenport, Iowa, on the 26th, and blowing Marshalltown, Iowa, on 1 October.

The circus had a bad train wreck on 1 October. Bowser recorded in his diary that day: "Teleg. from Ben Fish. Accident 5 a. m. near Marshalltown, Iowa. Second train ran into first. 3 stock cars destroyed, 8 horses killed (no one injured), 12 cages & 2 flats damaged. Can not show today (1st)." The route book estimated the loss at \$17,000; one newspaper put it at \$60,000 and another at \$75,000. While the cost of the damage was exaggerated, the destruction was bad enough for Barnum to write a letter to the *New York Clipper*.

Route Book, 1 October 1881, p. 24. Fearful smash-up this morning at daylight, five miles east of Tama City, and about twenty-four miles east of Marshalltown; baggage train, when about half way in on a switch was run into by the cage train, which was being pulled by two engines and running at a rate of speed sufficient to smash things up in general; two cars of horses were thrown from the track on their sides, standing the horses on their heads, as they were all tied on the under side of the cars; eight of them were killed, and the balance badly bruised and scratched up. The Snake Den, Rhino and Hyena cages were thrown from the train and pretty badly bent, also one of the baggage wagons; several of the chariots were badly demoralized; the Globe and Elephant Chariots retained their places on their respective flats, but the flats were forced off of their trucks and shoved one end on top of the other, and both of them on top of the fifty-foot flats, from where the cages were forced off the train; the two engines were pretty badly bent up, especially the first one; and, judging from appearances, they were making pretty good time when they struck the baggage train. We did not get away from the wreck till 5:00 p. m., losing the day's stand Marshalltown; damage estimated at \$17,000.

Circuses, New York Clipper, 8 October 1881, p. 467.

Accident.—P. T. Barnum sends to The Clipper the following telegram, which he received from his bookkeeper with the Barnum-London Show:

"Chelsea, Ia., Oct. 1.

"At five this morning first train while switching was run into by our second train. No persons were injured. Eight horses were killed, two stock-cars were destroyed, twelve cages and three flats were much damaged. Shall miss showing to day." Mr. Barnum adds: "We missed showing at Marshalltown, Ia., Oct. 2, but will show in Oskaloosa 3. We lost Springfield, Ill., Aug. 26 [he glanced at the route card too quickly as the show was in Springfield, Ohio that day; the Springfield, Illinois accident occurred on 9 September], from a similar collusion. A big show like ours, with three heavy trains, moving almost every night, must take big risks. We discount all these things before starting out in the Spring, and are satisfied in the Fall if we find a margin on the right side of the ledger. It is a consolation that nobody was killed. P. S .- A later dispatch just received says that our big working elephants rendered valuable assistance in removing the broken cars and debris. I am glad to believe the elephants saved all their trunks."

The New York Dramatic News, which was given to sweeping dictums, confidently proclaimed the death of the two and three ring circus after the season. While its prediction proved wrong, it had reason for this eulogy, however, as almost all reviews of the Barnum show complained about there being too much to watch in the three circles. The format stuck, of course, and included even more rings and stages on occasion. The one-ring exhibition did not come back into vogue until the late twentieth century when troupes such as Cirque du Soleil, Big Apple and Universoul revived the layout.

The Circus, New York Dramatic News, 24 September 1881, p. 8.

Many of the large shows will next year materially alter the style of ring performances, there being a most active hunt after real novelties. Three rings will be discarded by the Barnum-London shows for one. Forepaugh and Coup will probably have only one each, also. The three and tworing plans have not given the satisfaction it was thought they would. They impressed the public, however, with a sense of the immensity of the shows, but outside of that there was no point gained.

Bowser's diary on 3 October 1881 was of more than passing interest: "Jas. A. Bailey in City with Mr. Barnum." Then in code: "Barnum, Bailey, Hutch, Coup and Cooper." Then back to English: "Big thing." This suggests a partnership or alliance was in the making between the Barnum camp and W. C. Coup and James E. Cooper, Bailey's former partner, who may have been bankrolling Coup. While the Barnum and Forepaugh shows had great seasons, Coup had not done as well and needed an angel. These talks may have been a follow-up to Barnum's meeting with Coup in late August.

In early October the show headed west through Iowa to Omaha and Lincoln, Nebraska where the show did \$3454 [\$72,266] and \$2943 [\$61,575] respectively. The big day in St. Joseph, Missouri followed before a five day run in

Kansas, starting at Atchison on 11 October. The correspondent for *The Globe* in Atchison had more talent than most small-town journalists. While his tribute to press agent Dave Thomas struck the same cords as other reports, he understood Thomas's role better than others. He also thought Coup had a "little better" performance than Barnum's, essentially because Coup had what he called more "dash and crash." We would call it produc-

tion values. The show only did \$3054 [\$63,897] in Atchison, mainly because of heavy rain.

The Globe, Atchison, Kansas, 11 October 1881, p. 4.

The Central Branch brought in 350 circus passengers this morning.

We believe this is the only rainy circus day we have ever encountered. Our life has been singularly fortunate in this regard.

The Central Branch accommodation train will not leave to-night until 6 o'clock to accommodate people in attendance on the circus.

The Marshal arrested a pickpocket this morning in the act of picking a lady's pocket, and the circus season

of 1881 will close with him in Atchison.

One of the bands in Barnum's circus is composed of Indians, and, had the weather permitted, would have appeared in the procession in Indian costume.

At half past seven this morning the streets were full of strangers eager to see the circus procession, and by nine the sidewalks were almost impassable. We have never seen greater enthusiasm with reference to a circus.

Dr. Campbell was called this morning to feel the pulse and look at the tongue of Chang, the Chinese giant, and found him suffering from acute dyspepsia. He will appear at the performance to-night full of pepsin and bismuth.

H. M. Smith proposes, in case there is a drouth (sic) next summer, to run excursion trains into Atchison whenever rain is absolutely necessary. There is always rain when he advertises an excursion. In spite of the storm to-day, however, he brought in seven full coaches to the circus.

Barnum has evidently gone back on his theory that the public likes to be humbugged. There was no humbug about his procession to-day. The open dens of lions, tigers, hyenas, leopards and snakes were on hand, as were also the drove of elephants, the three brass bands, and other advertised attractions.

P. T. Barnum is now so old that he no longer travels with his show, but in a personal letter to the Tabor Bros., old friends and acquaintances, he expresses the regret that he could not visit them. "Enclosed you will find one hundred tickets for distribution among your patrons," he adds, "I am certain they deserve it. Please present my compliments to Mrs. Tabor and the children. Yours, B."

The Globe, Atchison, Kansas, 12 October 1881, p. 4.



The monkey exhibit in the menagerie must have been vast. Note the huge amount of text in this lithograph, a fairly

common feature of posters from the 1880s. Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

P. T. Barnum is known all over the world as a great advertiser, and so he is, but we believe he does not spend as much money in this direction as W. C. Coup, of the other big show, though he has a better press agent. His Mr. D. S. Thomas gets more free advertising than the advance agent

much money in this direction as W. C. Coup, of the other big show, though he has a better press agent. His Mr. D. S. Thomas gets more free advertising than the advance agent pays for, and he does it by taking press representatives to the show in a carriage, introducing them to the dwarfs, giants, white haired women, the performers, and finally seating them in chairs in a special department, where a young man is in attendance to distribute programmes, fans, lemonade, and confections. The result of all this is that the newspapers of the following day enter into cheerful rivalry with each other to write stunning things of Mr. Thomas and his show, which is really the best advertising in the world. . . . The expense of this advertising is five or six dollars for carriages, and the salary of Mr. Thomas, and as the advance agent paid several hundred dollars on this account, it will be seen that Thomas is the most valuable

man of the two. It is certainly very pleasant to walk around with a man who stirs up the animals with his cane; who feeds the elephants peanuts, and then throws the bag down their throats; who names the different animals, and tells how many keepers they have eaten; who is bowed to everywhere by the men in red coats who but for his presence would throw you outside the ropes; who takes you into the dressing room, and introduces you to the fairies who come tripping in from the ring; who orders the master of the stud (boss hostler, in plainer English) to take you among the stables, and through the property tents; who says he will send you a monkey and a parrot from the next town; who kicks the song book and candy stands if they should happen to bother you; who cracks jokes with the giants and the dwarfs, and tells them that you are a devilish[ly] promising fellow (whereupon the giants and the dwarfs smile, having heard it at the last town; in fact, all the season); who makes

PTBARNUM'S GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH, 🗫 GREAT LONDON CIRCUS,



John Foster was part of a long line of Shakespearan clowns when he appeared on Barnum and London in 1881. Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

the animals perform; and treats you like a king. All this Mr. Thomas does, and we cannot blame the writers for proclaiming the greatness of his show in their best space. The advertising managers complain about it occasionally but the writers usually have their way, hence the popularity of Barnum, Bailey & Hutchinson with the newspapers. Our opinion is that Coup's ring performance is a little better than Barnum's, although last night was hardly a fair comparison on account of the storm, but in the menagerie and museum departments nobody attempts to equal Barnum. We believe he also has better ring talent and more of it than Coup, but Coup makes more dash and crash over a twenty dollar performer than Barnum makes over one earning fifty. This fact deceives a great many, but there is really no rival to the show which pitched its tents here yesterday.

We neglected to mention in our notice of the matter yesterday that Mrs. Tom Thumb visited the Donald dry goods establishment on special invitation, and that the brothers sent a carriage to the Otis House after her. She seems to have been greatly pleased with the visit, for before leaving the city the little lady sent them the following note: "Gentlemen—In my admiration of your beautiful store this morning, I quite forgot to thank you for your politeness. I write this in apology and assure you that I enjoyed the visit to the store as much as you will enjoy your visit to Mr. Barnum's entertainment. Very truly yours, Mrs. Stratton."

Barnum and London appeared in Topeka, Kansas on 12 October. Aside from a friendly interview with Tom Thumb, almost all the news coverage was negative. The bad review of the performance is the only one found all season. The weather was unseasonably cold which may have led the show to shorten the exhibition. The Route Book entry for that day read: "Cold, cloudy and disagreeable." Business was bad with only \$3010 [\$62,977] in revenue. Inexplicitly, while the papers warned about crooks trailing the circus and even ran a story about a home

break in, the town Marshal told a paper that few nefarious characters were present on circus day.

Topeka (Kansas) Capital, 12 October 1881, n. p. n.

The General is not as young as once and has grown rather more portly since we saw him last. He enjoys good health and seems to get as much pleasure out of this world as anyone. He has not been in Topeka, he says, since 1869, and expresses himself surprised at the strides she has made towards becoming a great metropolis. Hubbell, a young dentist of this city is a nephew of the General's, and on this account he feels an interest in our city. The General was much interested in a group of Pottawatomie Indians who were on the street, but thought that the best way to dispose of the Indian question was to adopt the plan which Pharaoh inaugurated to dispose of the Israelites.

Lock Your Houses, The Commonwealth, Topeka, Kansas 12 October 1881, n. p. n.

The circus will be here today, and there will be many followers with it. We advise everybody to lock house and stable doors all day. It will be a wise precaution.

Warning, Topeka (Kansas) Capital, 12 October 1881, n. p. n.

Pinkerton's Detective Agency has sent out a circular to the authorities of the cities and towns along the line of the route of Barnum's circus, cautioning them to put every obstacle in the way of the large loose following which accompanies this gigantic show plying their swindling avocations under the guise of peddling operations. The public are particularly cautioned about leaving houses to go on to the street, without every precaution as to the safety of their doors and windows.

Topeka (Kansas) Capital, 12 October 1881, n. p. n.

This morning, as the family of Dr. Cooley, who lives on the corner of 7th and Lane streets were down on the avenue to see the procession, their house was entered by a burglar or burglars, and when they arrived home they found the contents of trunks, drawers and bureaus scattered all over the house. It is thought the burglars entered by the use of false keys as the windows were all fastened. The inside doors which Mrs. Cooley had carefully locked were broken from their hinges, and the whole house searched. Two young men who work at the asylum roomed in the house and it is thought had considerable money in their trunks. This was all taken and how much more it is impossible yet to determine. No clue can be obtained as to who the rascals were, but they were probably hangers on of Barnum's show.

Topeka (Kansas) Journal, 13 October 1881, n. p. n.

This great fraud has come and gone. The Barnum part of it was not here, Barnum only selling the use of his name to draw a crowd. The European part of it was, we presume, the ten cent swindle that followed the main show. The birds, like eagles' visits, were few and far between. The fact is that those who staid (sic) home have great cause to congratulate themselves, of those who attended we have heard but one expression of sentiment and that is disappointment.

Topeka (Kansas) Journal, 13 October 1881, n. p. n.

Marshal Cochran says there never were so few rough looking characters in Topeka as at present and the thieves and tramps that usually follow a show were not here yesterday or if they were, they kept very shady.

After Topeka the show moved to Lawrence for what was one of the worst days of the season. The Route Book summed it up: "Three cars of the cage train off the track in the yard this morning; lion cage knocked off one of the cars; cold disagreeable and raining all day; pack a wet canvas to-night." The pathetic \$528 [\$11,047] realized in Lawrence was the lowest one day income all year.

The company moved into Texas for a tour from 17 October to 8 November. In spite of buying off Coup to not enter the territory, the show did poorly in the Lone Star State, mostly because of the horrid weather. It rained in the evening in Fort Scott, Kansas on 15 October. People stayed home in droves and the revenue that day was only \$1003 [\$20,985]. In spite of a Sunday run of 363 miles, the longest of the year, the show was late getting into Gainesville on 17 October, and only gave the evening performance. The crowd was huge, however, spending \$5180 [\$108,379]. The next day at Greenville was terrible. The Route Book recorded: "Raining all day. Pack wet canvas. Give but one show. Bail ring breaks. Middle piece badly torn in taking the circus top down."

Mineola on the 19th was another low point as the company gave one performance under a single center pole big top. In Dallas on the 22nd, it drizzled during the day and then rained hard at night. The Route Book said the lot was "flooded knee-deep with water." Of course the canvas was soaked when it was taken down. In a great karmic irony, the tent crew chose that day to give Charles McLean, big top canvas boss, a \$35 gold-headed cane. One would think they really wanted to give him a beating.

Around this time, Bailey and Hutchinson cut the show down, sending some equipment back to Bridgeport early. The payroll would have also been trimmed.⁴⁸

The 24th at Galveston was the same old song: "Lot covered with water." At Navasota on the 26th, "Rains all day. Pack wet canvas. Terrible muddy lot. Did not get off the lot till 4:00 a. m." You can almost feel the fatigue and demoralization. Bill Woodcock, Sr. once wrote that there

was no glamour to the circus. "It's all hook worms and boils," he wryly noted. Those Barnum canvas guys knew what he meant. The 27th at Bryan: "Heavy rain this morning. Did not put up circus tent. Put up the menagerie tent; put in a few red seats, and build a ring in one end of it, old road show style."

It got no better. The Route Book submission for 28 October at Brenham was more of the same: "Delayed at Navasota this morning on account of a wreck. Did not get in till late in the afternoon. Put up circus tent and get supper. Caboose and sleeper get off the track seven miles east. Elephants walk to town." The 29th was another winner: "Remain at Brenham to-day and give one show, in preference to going to Austin and running the risk of getting in the ditch." The revenue for that week ending with the non-appearance in Austin was \$16,367 [\$342,439], second lowest of the year.

There was another wreck, a bad one, on the way to Waco for the 31 October appearance. Four flats jumped the track, smashing seventeen cages. The only good thing about the accident was its timing; it occurred at 6:00 a. m. Sunday morning, the 30th. While it took eleven hours to get the train moving, the show made the Monday stand in Waco where the \$6390 [\$133,695] gross was the best day of the entire Texas run.

On the 31st, Bowser noted the wreck in his diary: "Hempstead, Tex, October 30th. Daybreak cage train ran off track. Four flats with cages fall down embankment. Nobody hurt or animals killed. Will show tomorrow. B. Fish.' On the 25th Bailey's sleeper off the track. Truck damaged. Tom Thumb very nervous. Says they will never get home safe."

November didn't change anything. At Calvert on the 2nd, only one show was given after arriving late because of the long run and the condition of the track. The next day at Corsicana, "Considerable excitement was occasioned by a drayman firing a pistol in the tent and the arrest of four pickpockets."

On the way to Waxahachie on the 4th the front trucks on the elephant cars went off track, causing the afternoon performance to be cancelled. On 6 November at Sherman two sleepers and a flat jumped the track, causing a short delay. And on that happy note the Route Book ended.⁵⁰

The circus finally finished up Texas at Paris on 8 November. Four days in Arkansas concluded the itinerary, going out with a whimper at Newport on 12 November and \$1867 [\$39,062] in income. Coup must have thought he made a pretty good deal staying out of the state that fall. The show returned to Bridgeport on 19 November. Bowser wrote in his diary: "Barnum London Show arrived early this A. M. & looks like the end of a hard season."

The tour lasted 198 days and covered 11,238 miles including the 1459 mile home run to winter quarters. It appeared in nineteen states and the District of Columbia. Even with the late season slump, the final numbers went through the stratosphere. The average daily income was \$5815 [\$121,664] or \$34,877 [\$729,714] a week. Expenses averaged \$3938 [\$82,393] a day or \$23,628 [\$494,357] weekly. For the year revenues were \$1,116,391 [\$23,357,694] and expenses \$755,888 [\$15,815,069]. The



After the success of the 1881 season, Barnum, Bailey and Hutchinson were on the top of the circus world in this classic 1882 lithograph. Note emphasis on excursion tickets at bottom. Cincinnati Art Museum Collection.

dividend, which loosely translated into the profit, was \$2135 [\$44,670] a day or \$12,813 [\$268,080] weekly. The partners declared \$410,000 [\$8,578,226] in dividends for the year, Barnum taking \$205,000 [\$4,289,113] for his half interest and Bailey and Hutchinson \$102,500 [\$2,144,557] each for their quarter shares. This was Hollywood movie mogul money.

While the circus was mucking around Texas, the *Dramatic Times* broke the story that Barnum, Bailey and Hutchinson had purchased the Forepaugh and Coup shows, with the acquisition of the W. W. Cole show and the Batcheller and Doris Circus next. The attempt to monopolize the business was Bailey's brainchild, and typical of the era. In the 1870s and 1880s many industries were consolidated with one huge firm dominant for the purpose of ending what was considered wasteful competition. John D. Rockefeller did it in the oil industry, and

Andrew Carnegie did it in steel. While they were often accused of unethical business practices, in truth they relentlessly hammered on costs and continuously brought down prices.

Bailey looked at the landscape of the circus business in the same manner and saw all the money wasted on opposition billing, competition for star performers, investment in animals on so on. The first article below notes concern among the artistes about their salaries declining under such a scheme. They had reason to worry. When John Ringling bought the American Circus Corporation in 1929, he cut salaries, like Bill Clinton, because he could. Doubtless, Bailey would have done the same. Another loser in such a plan would have been the lithographing companies.

Unquestionably the effort to buy the Forepaugh show was genuine. On 4 November Bowser wrote in his diary: "I learn BB&H have bought into Adam." On the 10th The Buffalo Daily Courier published a short squib that the Barnum interests had purchased Forepaugh's Circus. While that newspaper would seem an unlikely source, another division of the parent company printed lithographs for the Barnum circus and other shows. Bailey and other show executives were friendly with the paper's management, and could have passed along details of the purchase.

Barnum got in the act in his usual way, by talking to the press, in this case in a remarkably candid interview in which he laid out the plans for 1882 if the talks with Forepaugh and Coup were successful. He commented that his organization would have two compa-

nies, one traveling in the East, the other in the West. It took ninety years, but Irvin Feld fulfilled this vision with the Red and Blue units of Ringling-Barnum.

By the time the *New York Sun* got a hold of the story on 6 November, it appeared Bailey was poised to buy every railroad show on tour. While much of its article was fanciful, it did a wonderful job stating the rationale for the mergers.

In the next week's *New York Clipper*, Barnum coyly stated that he and his partners had no intention of consolidating with any rivals, but left the door open for possible purchases.

A Great Circus Stroke, The Bucks County Gazette, Bristol, Pennsylvania, 3 November 1881, p. 1.

There is a report current in New York, which the Dramatic Times says is well founded, to the effect that Barnum, Bailey & Hutchinson have purchased outright the Forepaugh and Coup shows. It was pretty well known for some time past that it was Mr. J. A. Bailey's ambition to secure a monopoly in the circus business in America, and his every effort for the last six or eight months has been directed toward the accomplishment of that object. With

the Barnum-London, Forepaugh and Coup concerns under his control, with the prospect of a directing interest in the W. W. Cole and Batcheller and Doris shows, he will be the supreme ruler of the circus business of this country. The name of Barnum will get most of the credit for this enterprise, but J. A. Bailey is known as the prime mover in the new scheme. It is proposed to send the Coup show to Europe and travel it there for the ensuing three years. The Forepaugh concern will be kept in this country, and will be run under its original name. Performers are said to be particularly exercised about the news, for the reason that it will have an important bearing on their salaries. They will no longer be able to fight Coup against Forepaugh, Forepaugh against Coup, and Barnum against both. Salaries must go down. The Times says: "The fruition of the ambitious scheme of Bailey's has staggered the oldest showman by its bold conception and brilliant culmination. No other but Bailey would have dreamed of such a thing as the purchasing complete of a pair

of such stupendous concerns and the retirement of their owners who were, in a sense, the rivals of Barnum. The latter himself could never have conceived such an idea, and, it is said, it was a long while before the advantages of so colossal an enterprise could be made apparent to him. The extraordinary nature of the proposal dazzled him at first, but, upon reflection, he opposed it as too extravagantly preposterous to merit serious consideration. Mr. Bailey at length brought the old gentleman around, and the rest was easy. Mr. Farini has contracted to furnish Mr. Barnum for next season all the attractions under his control, such as Lulu, Zazel, the Zulus, and similar features, for the sum of \$25,000.

The Circus Business, New Haven (Connecticut) Evening Register, 7 November 1881, p. 4.

P. T. Barnum has been interviewed in regard to the rumored circus combination and consolidation for the coming year. He says that the only real rival to his own great show is that of Adam Forepaugh and that negotiations with a good prospect of success for buying up this show have been pending for some time. Forepaugh, he says, is ready and willing to retire from the business. The Van Amburgh show is advertised to be sold on Tuesday Nov. 22, at Amenia, Duchess county, New York. The agents of the Barnum show will in all probability be on hand to purchase anything that is deemed desirable in the way of circus stock. Mr. Barnum further stated that his concern greatly desired to send over a mammoth show to Europe next season. In order to do this, and still keep an immense exhibition in this country, it would be necessary to make purchases of stock. By getting good material out of other shows and adding considerable new, another grand aggregation could be started, or rather it would be a doubling up of the size of the present show. Mr. Barnum has two agents now in Europe looking after novelties. They are also conferring with railroad managers regarding the building of special cars to carry circus trains over the roads. American



While this 1882 image has only a passing acquintence with reality, it does convey the excitement and energy of the leaping that closed the show. Cincinnati Art Museum Collection.

cars cannot be used as their trucks are so high that the cages and wagons would strike the low bridges common to most roads in that country. "If it should be found impossible to make the European tour," said Mr. Barnum, "we will divide up the United states and cover it east and west with two shows, both of immense proportions and both under the ownership of Barnum, Bailey & Hutchinson. This will leave room for only small concerns, who will have to utilize, so to speak, 'the back towns,' or else be driven from the field. One section of the great show will exhibit in one part of the country one season and in the other part the next." Mr. Barnum thinks this will monopolize the whole business, or at least that part of it which is of any importance. He wishes it to be distinctly understood that there is to be no consolidation with other concerns. All circuses or menageries that are bought, will be obtained only for enlarging the size and adding to the attractiveness of the concern owned only and entirely by Barnum, Bailey & Hutchinson.

A Corner in Circuses, The Philadelphia (Pennsylvania) Inquirer, 9 November 1881, p. 3.

A proposed corner in circuses is the latest thing in monopolies. Thus far the negotiations have been conducted with secrecy on the part of the supposed principals, but enough has leaked out to interest showmen, and to create no little apprehension among the performers who have been gainers by the recent sharp competition.

The rivalry of the three great shows—Barnum's, Forepaugh's, and Coup's—has been at the very highest pitch the past season. Never before has there been so lavish advertising, so keen forethought, or so widespread outreaching to control the patronage of shows. No sooner was

one circus billed in a town than another followed with more attractive promises. Miles of fences have been covered with bright colors. Country newspapers have reaped rich harvests of advertising. Big bills and little bills have been scattered with prodigal confusion, and red and yellow paint have been at a premium. It has not been uncommon for one show to cover the bills of another, or to send advance couriers to say, "this show is a fraud; wait for ours."



William Dutton, the subject of this 1882 Strobridge lithograph, was the principal male bareback rider in 1881. Cincinnati Art Museum Collection.

All this has been very expensive, and in many cases the outlay has not been met by the income. The great expense made necessary high prices and "dodges" to induce people to pay them.

It is said that the idea of lessening the cost of shows by consolidating the competitors originated in the brain of Mr. J. A. Bailey, of the firm of Barnum, Bailey & Hutchinson, the proprietors of Barnum's show, and that he has been at work six months trying to effect the consolidation. The shows that it would be necessary to consolidate under such a scheme would be Barnum's, Forepaugh's, Coup's, Sells Brothers', Welsh & Sands', Wm. Cole's, Batcheller & Dorris's (sic), Burr & Robbins (sic), Jno. Robinson's, Jno. O'Brien's, Van Amburgh's, Jno. Murray's and about fifteen others. The aggregate value of all these shows is estimated at about \$1,200,000. The scheme of consolidation contemplates a parceling out of the world so that routes will not conflict, and running the business at lower pressure. But it is by no means certain that such men as Forepaugh or Coup will permit themselves to be swallowed whole. Then some of the smaller shows, like Murray's and others that can do a paying business in towns that the big shows cannot afford to touch, have not been disposed to enter the new arrangement. Some of the veterans of the show business, like John J. Nathans, Geo. F. Bailey and Lewis June, are disposed to look upon the scheme with distrust. They say it reminds them of the old Zoological Institute scheme of 1835, when a similar attempt was made to get up a corner in shows, which resulted in disastrous failure. It was found that the shows that kept out of that combination did better than those that went in. George Starr, Barnum's old agent, now at Bunnell's Museum, said last night:

"It reminds me of my own attempt to get up a corner in curiosities. I found that the more I bought the more there were to buy. They began to water the stock, and we had to

give it up. The trouble with this proposed monopoly is that it proposes to get along without as many performers as are now required. What is to become of these performers? They would be taken up by a shrewd manager who would create a new competition. It does not, therefore, seem probable that the consolidation can succeed. Nevertheless there are some indications that preliminary negotiations have been made. The agents of the great shows have been seen together in different parts of the country, and it is possible that a partial consolidation may be effected."—New York Sun [6 November 1881].

Circuses, New York Clipper, 12 November 1881, p. 554

Consolidation of shows.—A rumor has gained some circulation that James A. Bailey of Barnum, Bailey and Hutchinson, proprietors of the Barnum Show, has originated a plan to prevent circuses conflicting with one another on their routes through the country, and that is to consolidate all the principal shows under one management. To carry out such a scheme it would be necessary to secure the co-opera-

tion of the proprietors of the following shows: Forepaugh's, Coup's, John Robinson's, Van Amburgh's, John O'Brien's Sells Brothers', W. W. Cole's, Burr Robbins', Batcheller & Doris', and possibly a dozen others, which does not seem to us to be practicable. P. T. Barnum writes to The Clipper as follows:

Bridgeport, Ct., Nov. 6, 1881.

Frank Queen—Dear Sir: There is no truth in the statement in to-day's Sun that the Barnum-London Show is forming a combination with other managers of traveling shows to exhibit. Perhaps we might buy up half a dozen or more shows if they were offered cheap enough, but Barnum, Bailey & Hutchinson form no partnership with anybody. Truly yours, P. T. Barnum.

The purchase of the Foreapaugh show unraveled by mid-November. Charles Day made it official when he announced in the *New York Clipper* that no offer was made for the Forepaugh show and even if there had been, Forepaugh would have never accepted it.

At this juncture we have no idea why. It was hardly the only deal that went south in the circus or any other industry. Examples abound in field show history: the Ringlings' attempt to buy the Carl Hagenbeck Circus in 1906, William P. Hall's offer for Forepaugh-Sells in 1911, Jerry Mugivan's bid for the Ringling show in 1929, John Ringling and auto magnate William Durant's plan to re-gain control of Ringling-Barnum in 1934, baseball impresario Bill Veeck's effort to purchase the Ringling show in 1957, and Dory Miller's proposal to buy the Beatty-Cole Circus in 1984. Ironically, when Adam Forepaugh went to heaven in early 1890, Bailey, Barnum and James E. Cooper

finally became the owners of his circus, buying it for \$160,000 from his widow.

Circuses, New York Clipper, 19 November 1881, p. 571.

Richard Dockrill's liberty horse act was one of many superb equine displays in the program. This lithograph dates from 1882. Cincinnati Art Museum Collection.

Chas. H. Day, confidential agent for Adam Forepaugh, informs The respondent that there is no

truth whatever in the statement that a proposition has been made to Mr. Forepaugh by parties connected with the Barnum-Bailey Show for the purchase of Forepaugh's Circus and Menagerie. No such proposition has ever been made by the parties in question or anyone else. Had any such proposition been made to Mr. Forepaugh he would not have entertained it for a single moment, and he has never named, and will not name, any price whatever for his immense aggregation. The season just closed netted him, Mr. Day says, "A clear profit of \$250,000, and with this money he is about to erect two blocks of handsome dwellings in Philadelphia, where he already owns 116 homes, all located in the same ward. Next season he will have on the road two circuses, one traveling by rail, the other by wagon, and during the Fall and Winter season of 1882-83 he will take out a first class dramatic company to play spectacular pieces in first class legitimate theatres in a style of magnificence never equaled in this country, introducing lions, tigers, elephants, horses, camels and other animals. He will shortly open an office on Chestnut street, Philadelphia, in his own building, for the transaction of business pertaining to these gigantic schemes. He is still searching for a suitable location for a theatre in Philadelphia, as soon as he can obtain it, erect a magnificent temple to the honor and glory of Thespis, and the spectacular drama."

Henry Eugene Bowser penned the last words of the season when he noted in his diary on 2 December 1881: "Mr. Barnum telephones has written B & Hutch not to buy out Coup. So [Coup?] will probably have to loan money of the banks."

So after the tumultuous season, after Barnum's illness, after all the competition and dirty tricks, after the deaths, after the terrible weather, after the railroad wrecks, after the negotiations with Forepaugh and Coup, and after all the glory and gold, the year ended where it started with the three rival circuses still independent of one another. The Barnum, Bailey and Hutchinson Circus was the biggest field show ever conceived to that point, almost certainly the first to have revenue over \$1,000,000 and



dividends over \$400,000. It was, as almost all reviewers said in so many words, the Greastest Show on Earth, the perfect circus.

The author thanks the following for their muchneeded assistance in the preparation of this article: Maureen Brunsdale, Erin Foley, Steve Gossard, Judy Griffin, Donald Horowitz, John F. Polacsek. Arthur H. Saxon. Stuart Thaver, and Debbie Walk. I am especially indebted to Stuart Hicks for allowing me to use some of the unique material in the James L.

Hutchinson Papers, and Howard Tibbals for sharing a portion of his wonderful poster collection, surely the finest ever assembled. Most of the newspaper citations were found on internet sites.

NOTES

- 1. Keystone Courier, Connellsville, Pennsylvania, 11 June 1880, p. 1.
- 2. All figures in brackets represent 1881 dollars converted into 2007 dollars using the website measuringworth.com. Determining equivalent worth over such a long time is inexact at best and grotesquely misleading at worst. A rough approximation, 1881 dollars updated to current value, if nothing else, gives an idea of the magnitude of the Barnum and London Circus. Edited by Scott Derks, The Value of a Dollar (Lakeville, Connecticut: Grey House Publishing, 1999) is a compendium of earnings and prices between 1860 and 1999. It lists wages for certain jobs: in 1881 firemen in Massachusetts earned \$1.42 a day, bricklayers in Massachusetts made \$2.83, while Connecticut carpenters were paid \$2.33, all for ten hour work days. New York farm laborers made \$1.25 a day for a sixty-three hour work week. A fifty cent general admission circus ticket represented 40% of a farm hand's daily income.
- 3. "P. T. Barnum," Rochester (New York) Union and Advertiser, 17 August 1880, p. 3. Reprinted from the Indianapolis (Indiana) Journal, 11 July 1880.
- 4. Conover, Richard E., The Affairs of James A. Bailey (Xenia, Ohio: the author, 1957), p. 3. Conover appears to be the first person to question the standard explanation of Barnum's alliance with Bailey and Hutchinson.
 - 5. H. E. Bowser Diary, 1880, author's collection.
- 6. I am indebted to Arthur H. Saxon, the great Barnum scholar, for cracking Bowser's code and providing the author with a deciphered translation.
- 7. The 26 May agreement is part of the Hutchinson Papers. See endnote 8. A letter from Barnum to Bailey dated 14 October references the 22 July agreement. This last was auctioned at Christie's on 7 November 1995 along with what was probably Bailey's copy of the 26

August agreement. The current location of both items is unknown to the author, who worked from photocopies kindly sent him by Donald Horowitz. Other copies of the 26 August contract are held by the author and the Bridgeport, Connecticut, Public Library. The one is the author's collection is a copy made by Bowser at the time for Barnum.

- 8. The importance of the Hutchinson Papers, held by Stuart Hicks, cannot be overestimated. They are one of a handful of great archives concerning circus history. He and Judy Griffin shared some of its riches at the 2001 convention of the Circus Historical Society. Hicks has expressed an interest to further develop his material and to make contact with fellow researchers. He can he reached shicks@innet.net.au. Needless to say, the author is extremely grateful to Hicks for allowing him to use his data. The Hutchinson Papers contain far more detail about the consolidation than related here.
- 9. Chester (Pennsylvania) Daily Times, 13 March 1880, p. 3.
- 10. Photograph of cover in author's collection. This item was purchased by the author's father from the circusiana dealer P. M. McClintock of Franklin, Pennsylvania, who probably acquired it in one of his many trades with Princeton University. That providence makes it highly likely that Bailey himself preserved this 6" x 8" image. Many of Bailey's papers were given to Princeton University in the 1930s by his brother-in-law, Joseph T. McCaddon. A significant holding of other Bailey materials was retained by McCaddon when he made the original gift to Prince-

ton. His descendants auctioned these items in 1978, where, sad to report, they were scattered to the four winds. They also sold the Bridgeport Public Library McCaddon's unpublished memoir of Bailey.

- 11. The Hutchinson Papers shed considerable light on
- 12. Cleveland (Ohio) Leader, 31 July 1880, n. p. n. The author is indebted to John F. Polacsek for sharing this important citation along with many others.
- 13. The heralds cited in this and an earlier paragraph are in the author's collection.
 - 14. Cleveland (Ohio) Leader, 31 July 1880, n. p. n.
 - 15. Franklin Gazette, Malone, New York, 6 August 1880,

GONE! GONE! GONE!

Sold at Public Auction! ____NOT THE____ 1881

P. T. BARNUM'S

Greatest Show on Earth!

----UNITED WITH-

BAILEY & HUTCHINSON'S

GREAT LONDON CIRCUS.

Which is to Exhibit at

Decatur, Saturday Sep. 10.

2 IMMENSE PERFORMANCES AT 2 & 8 P. M.

DOORS OPEN ONE HOUR EARLIER, BUT THE CATALOGUE, AS

All used up Circus Traps. All the old worn out Wagons. All the old-fashioned cars. All the old dilapidated cages. All the dirty-faced wax figures. All the thread-bare wardrobe. All the old, ragged, rotten canvass. All the broken poles and fuzzy ropes. All the stuffed birds and monkeys. All the repulsive stuffed snakes. All the stuffed mermaids and mud turtles. All the regularies thind was the stuffed mermaids and mud turtles. All the naged and spavined horses. All the useless time-worn harness. All gone under the auctioneer's hammer; sold for any price to the highest bidder.

FOR FULL TEN YEARS OR MORE

They have done service, but the old must give place to the new

WE CANNOT AFFORD OLD AND DECAYED CIRCUS PROPERTY.

WHAT WE HAVE NOT GOT—Any automatic museum stuff. Any so-called flying machines. Any death-inviting hot sir Balloons. Any misnamed "Sleeping Beauties." Any ingeniously arranged "Crying Babies." Any automatic monkey or "Gideon Bands." Any stuffed ferocious wild beasts, or any work of the Taxe-dermist at all.

WHAT WE HAVE GOT—Every curiosity a living, breathing sur The seven Giant-wonders. CHANG, the Chinese giant. Repr



The Largest Menagerie in the world! With specimens of every animal, bird and reptile found in the leaves of Natural History. GENERAL TOM TRUMB and WIFE, the smallest married mice of the control of the

Admission

50 cents. Children under 9 years 25 cents, Reserved seats 25 cts extra. On account of the enormous expense Free Passes to any body cannot be tolerated. We never advertise an act, feature or curiosity which we do not exhibit—remember this. All roads centering into the city run excursion trains at low rates of fare. 2# Tickets can be purchased the days of exhibition at Curtis & Co.'s Jewelry store, at the usual slight advance.

Springfield, Friday September 9th.

1882 and 1883 are from this source. See George Middleton, Circus Memoirs, (Los Angeles: George Rice & Sons, 1913), p. 42, for quotation from Bailey.

- 25. Saxon, op. cit., p. 273; New York (New York) Times, 14 December 1880, p. 5; Bowser diary, 7 January 1881; Washington (District of Columbia) Post, 8 April 1881, p. 4, and 14 April 1881, p. 2.
- 26. New York (New York) Times, 19 May 1881, p. 10; Brooklyn (New York) Daily Eagle, 5 July 1881, p. 2.
- 27. New York Clipper, January to March 1881. Hutchinson appeared on the 19 February cover; Bailey on the 27 November 1880 cover.
 - 28. See Fred Dahlinger, "The Development of the Rail-

p. 3.

16. The Ogdensburg Advance and St. Lawrence Weekly, Ogdensburg, New York, 31 March 1898, p. 3.

17. The New York (New York) Sun, 5 September 1880. McCaddon's copy of the interview is in the Bridgeport, Connecticut. Public Library. The Sun article was widely reprinted.

18. New York Dramatic News, 2 October 1880, p. 10; New York Clipper, 2 October 1880, p. 223.

19. New York Clipper, 16 October 1881, p. 235.

Barnum and London's advertising for Decatur, Illinois highlighted what the show didn't have, a novelty that responded to Forepaugh's charges that the Barnum show was made up of old equipment and features Circus World Museum Collection.

- 20. "Circus Stock at Auction," Philadelphia (Pennsylvania) Inquirer, 6 November 1880, p. 2; New York Clipper, 13 November 1880, p. 267,
- 21. New Haven (Connecticut) Sunday Union, 20 March 1881, p. 1.
- 22. Decatur (Illinois) Daily Republican, 18 December 1880, p. 2; Baltimore (Maryland) Sun, 6 April 1881, p. 4; New York Clipper, 25 December 1880, p. 315.
- 23. Saxon, A. H., P. T. Barnum, the Legend and the Man (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 258, Bowser Diary, 19 August 1880.
- 24. Crowley, W. G., Route Book of Cooper & Bailey's Great London Circus for the Season of 1880, (Philadelphia: Merrihew & Son, 1880), p. 5. H. E. Bowser, he of the invaluable diary, gave us another gift by preserving a small account book that listed the revenue and often the profit for Barnum's circus from 1881 to 1893. The references to the Barnum and London profit for



road Circus,"
Part Three,
Bandwagon,
March-April
1984, pp. 33-35.

29. The railroad contract is in the author's collection. Wood, T., Wood's Route Book of P. Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth Consolidated with The Great London Circus, Sanger's Royal British Menagerie and Great International Allied show for the Season of 1881. (Kansas City: Ramsey, Millett & Hudson 1881), pp. 9-10.

30. "Barnum's Great Procession," New York (New York) Times, 27 March 1881, p. 2.

31. See the New Haven (Connecticut) Sunday Union, 8 May 1881, p. 1, for an example.

32. Cleveland (Ohio) Herald, 31 July 1880, 3

A corpulent Adam Forepaugh towers above his competitors, from left to eight, William C. Coup, John Robinson, James A. Bailey, P. T. Barnum, and James L. Hutchinson. This Strobridge lithograph probably dates from 1881. Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

August 1880, and 9 August 1880. Cleveland (Ohio) Leader, 30 July 1880, 5 August 1880.

33. The author worked from a reproduction of Forepaugh's bill sold along with other circus memorabilia by former Ringling-Barnum press agent, bill writer and artist Roland Butler in the 1950s. Among the items he peddled were about twenty letterheads sold as originals that were undoubtedly copies and in some cases outright fabrications. Thus the authenticity of everything he sold is suspect. In the author's opinion, however, the language, lay out, and overall feel of the herald appears genuine. The only thing wrong with it is the paper, which is unlike any used for circus heralds in 1881. In contrast, most of the bogus stationary is clearly anachronistic.

Butler's letterheads are always available on eBay, and are almost always sold as originals. This being said, Saxon quotes the Forepaugh bill in his Barnum biography, citing the Bridgeport Public Library as his source. Additionally the Hertzberg Collection, now at San Antonio's Witte Museum, had a bill very similar to this when Stuart Thayer and I visited the collection at its old location in the early 1980s.

34. Wood, op. cit., p. 17.

35. Hugh Coyle, "The Circus Press Agent," Billboard, 24 November 1906, p. 43. His account is suspect, however, because he also stated that "Barnum had to mortgage his Broadway properties to secure money enough to float the derelict Barnum, Bailey & Hutchinson show to get out in the next year, 1882." Further, "Adam Forepaugh not only breasted the continuous hurricane, but topped one million dollars in receipts, the first to ever reach that figure, and the only one since, in a single season." Although evidence is lacking, Forepaugh could well have taken in over a million dollars in 1881, but so did the Barnum show, reaching a million bucks eight times between 1881 and 1892, nine if the receipts from the 11 November 1889-15 February 1890 London engagement are added to the 1889 North American gross of \$891,653. Further, the Barnum show came back to quarters loaded with loot.

36. Baltimore (Maryland) Sun, 6 April 1881, p. 4.

37. Decatur (Illinois) Daily Republican, 26 April 1881, p. 2; Georgia Weekly Telegraph, Macon, Georgia, 22 April 1881, p. 1; New Haven (Connecticut) Sunday Union, 17 April 1881, p. 3; Philadelphia (Pennsylvania) Inquirer, 9 April 1881, p. 8; 11 April 1881, p. 4; and 21 April 1881, p. 5

38. Handbill in author's collection.

39. *The Evening Gazette*, Port Jervis, New York, 9 May 1881, p. 1.

40. Thanks to Maureen Brunsdale, Special Collections and Rare Books Librarian at Illinois State University, for providing the author with copies of the pertinent Bloomington newspapers, and to Steve Gossard for putting me in touch with her.

41. New York Dramatic News, 24 September 1881, p. 8.

42. A draft of the 1882 Forepaugh-Barnum routing agreement is in the Bridgeport, Connecticut, Public Library. In his unpublished memoir on Bailey, Joseph McCaddon stated that the agreement to divide territory was renewed in 1883, but that in 1884, the year of the white elephant war, they banged on one another again.

43. The Day quotation is from William L. Slout, *Olympians of the Sawdust Circle*, (San Bernardino, California: The Borgo Press, 1998), p. 121; *New York Dramatic News*, 27 August 1881, p. 2.

44. Cleveland (Ohio) Leader, 10 August 1881, n. p. n.

45. Wood, op. cit., p. 22.

46. New York Clipper, 1 October 1881, p. 451.

47. Wood, op. cit., p. 25.

48. Bowser Diary, 23 October 1881. The train arrived that day in Bridgeport at 5:00 a.m.

49. Weekly Herald, Dallas, Texas, 10 November 1881, p. 4.

50. The disastrous Texas trip is well documented in Wood, op. cit., pp. 25, 27.





2008 Big E Super Circus Stars



THE BIG E • SEPT. 18 - OCT. 4, 2009



Eastern States Exposition • 1305 Memorial Avenue • West Springfield, Massachusetts 01089 Telephone 413-737-2443 • Fax 413-787-0127 • www.TheBigE.com

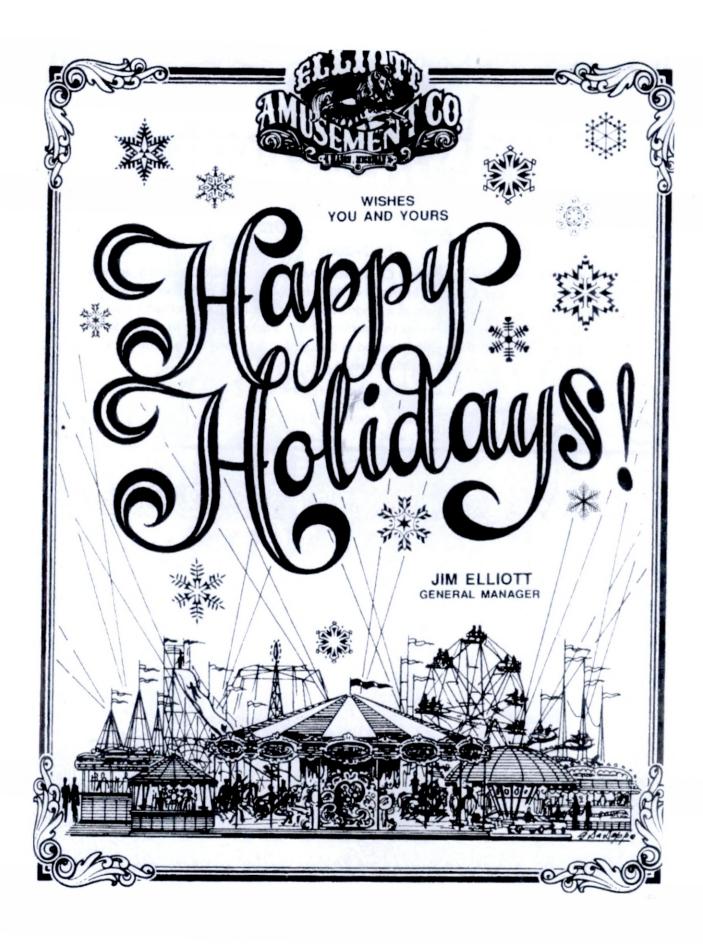
Wayne McCary, President & CEO



CHILDRESS SHOWS, INC. PRESENTS



Seasons Greetings



"Although but a woman" Agnes Lake and the Twentieth Annual Tour of Lake's Hippo-Olympiad

By Carrie Bowers

This paper was presented at the 2007 Circus Historical Society's Annual Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada. It is based on material in Agnes Lake Hickok Queen of the Circus, Wife of a Legend, by Linda Fisher and Carrie Bowers, which will be released by the University of Oklahoma Press in March 2009. All rights reserved.

After their marriage in 1846 Agnes and Bill Lake performed with nearly a dozen different troupes, started their own venture with "Old John" Robinson of Cincinnati in 1859, and by 1869 they owned and operated their own circus, Lake's Hippo-Olympiad and Mammoth Circus.

Agnes Lake played a unique role in the ever-changing world of circuses. Her adapted version of Mazeppa-based on Lord Byron's poem about a 17th century Polish youth--bridged the gap between traditional stage productions and the circus arena. Later, she demonstrated her acuity for popular trends by exhibiting a balloon ascension as pre-show, entertainment. Agnes was also one of the few female animal trainers in nineteenth century circuses. As the first female proprietor to own and operate a tent show in America, Agnes headed one of the. first companies to use the railroad as the main conveyance throughout a season. Both she and her daughter Emma Lake participated in the revitalization of the haut ecole vogue. In addition, Agnes was a performer with the Great Eastern Circus--managed by Robert E. J. Miles, George DeHaven, Andrew Haight, and Dan Carpenter--that initiated a two-ring circus; a drastic change from a solo

She became a respected business





woman and performer within the circus community and across the nation. Agnes prided herself on the fact that her shows were family oriented and free from vulgar performers or acts. She earned additional national attention and international fame when she performed in Berlin in 1865, while Prince Karl sat in the audience.

Agnes Lake

Agnes and her first husband Bill Lake, a popular circus performer in his own right, started a new phase in their business strategy for the 1868-1869 season. Outfitted with plenty of wagons, performers, and a small menagerie of animal entertainment, the Lakes began an ambitious twelve-month season. Rather than limiting their performances to the traditional itinerant season, April through October, Lake's Hippo-Olympiad traveled almost continually throughout the year. The new business scheme kept the company moving and it provided a steady stream of cash flowing into the treasury. The southern and western states offered thousands of venues and infinite travel itineraries, allowing the company to stay in the warmer southern states a month at

Bill Lake, "the veteran Son of Momus," was joined by two other circus veterans: Hi Marks, "the Humorist and Shakespearean Clown," and Al Aymar, the "Wit and Philosopher." Agnes thrilled audiences with her *Mazeppa* and performed alongside the rest of their equestrian troupe.

Bill Lake

The newspapers heralded their arrival and reminded their readers that "this establishment ... is positively the Largest as well as the Best

Traveling Exhibition on the face of the Globe....² Wherever Lake's Hippo-Olympiad traveled its good reputation preceded them, as noted by another journalist: "The great 'Napoleon of Showmen' comes among us ... the 'greatest, finest and most wonderful exhibition' that ever visited the South ... the Press speak unhesitatingly of its merits in the most wonderful terms ... the features of this model establishment are great riders, most daring gymnasts, most renowned acrobats, best general performers, most famous vaulters, [and] best trained horses....³

In Sandersville, Georgia, one journalist quipped, "if the people are as anxious to get to heaven as they are to attend places of amusement, Satan will have a small crowd in his domain." 4

At long last Agnes and Bill Lake were on the verge of achieving financial security and entertainment immortality. Lake's Hippo-Olympiad had a solid reputation of providing daring yet wholesome family entertainment by a world-class ensemble. The future was bright and promising. Newspapers all over the South and the Midwest declared that Lake's Hippo-Olympiad was the "King Bee" of shows and Bill Lake himself was proclaimed "The Napoleon of Showmen!" 5

After a summer of successful shows and high praise, the Lakes and their company traveled to Granby, a remote hamlet in southwest Missouri. Granby was treated to only irregular visits by traveling showmen, and the town eagerly awaited the arrival of the circus. The company arrived and the pre-show routines commenced: the canvas was erected on the dusty lot, the horses were watered and harnessed in their concert tack, and the performers slipped into their costumes and waited for the show to begin.

Agnes and Bill's dream was suddenly shattered on a hot August night when violence changed the future of their show swiftly and permanently:

HORRIBLE TRAGEDY!

William Lake, Proprietor of the famous Lake's Hippo-olympiad and Mammoth CIRCUS

> SHOT & INSTANTLY KILLED BY A DESPERADO,

Who Escapes. A most wanton, cruel, cowardly Murder. Intense excitement among the PEOPLE. The community aroused and horror-struck. Parties after the MURDERER. 6

In the subsequent days, myriad newspapers across Missouri and as far away as the *New York Clipper* reported the shocking news of Bill Lake's murder. According to witnesses the trouble began after the evening's regular performance on August 21, when the ushers found 24-year-old Jacob Killian⁷ "secreted under a seat." Bill Lake was summoned, grabbed Killian by the collar and ordered him to vacate immediately or pay the extra admission. Killian then "drew his revolver, which was immediately wrenched away from him and he was put



MONDAY and TUESDAY,

FEBRUARY 6 and 7.

out at the door of the canvas." 8

An 1871 Hippo-Olympiad newspaper ad.

The Sedalia, Missouri Weekly Bazoo reprinted an article that recounted that evening's tragic events: while Lake was relating the incident to Marshal Bailey, who had arrived to investigate the incident, Killian crept up behind Bailey who was facing Lake, pointed his revolver and shot Lake in the chest. He was immediately carried to his room in the Southwestern Hotel, and died minutes later.9

Jacob Killian disappeared into the night and a month later he was apprehended nearly 300 miles away on the other side of Missouri. Bill Lake was buried the very next day in a local cemetery. The circus community was stunned at his sudden and untimely death. His resume included more than a dozen companies during his thirty-five-year career and he was finally enjoying the success of his own venture.

In that brief instant, Agnes was suddenly a widow at age forty-three, and she contemplated her future as a proprietor. Because she had so many employees depending on her for their livelihood, Agnes could not abide by society's protocol and quietly retreat into the Victorian conception of

widowhood. And so, the day after she buried Bill Lake, she assumed sole command of Lake's Hippo-Olympiad. According to the memoirs of her son-in-law Gilbert N. Robinson, she gathered her employees and announced her plans, "Although Mr. Lake is dead . . . I intend to carry on his circus just as though he were here with us. If any of you think I am incapable, all I ask is that you will give me two weeks' notice and I will endeavor to fill your places. I am determined to keep the show on the road and I shall succeed." 10

Agnes was determined to keep her circus alive and she buried her grief in the managerial duties of the circus. She kept the show on the road and produced an amazing season. Throughout the fall and winter of 1869, Agnes led the ensemble to nearly 100 stands and never missed a date. The company traveled throughout Missouri in September, where the Morgan County Weekly Banner printed advertisements that Agnes's "Indomitable Acrobats" and "Dashing Horsemen" would soon arrive.

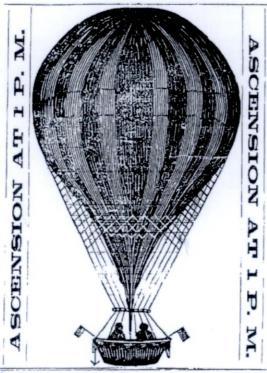
Agnes Lake's Hippo -Olympiad--as it was now often

MONDAY, JULY 24, 1871.

LAKE'S HIPPO OLYMPIAD

- AND -

MAMMOTH CIRCUS.



WILL

EXHIBIT AT CHEYENNE.

FOR ONE DAY ONLY

Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, 19 June 1871. Courtesy, University of Wyoming Library, Larmie, Wyoming.

billed--trekked across Arkansas in October and by November the troupe had reached the warmer climates of Texas and Louisiana. According to the posters and handbills, Johnny Foster and Ned Ainsley (who had joined a few months earlier) were still conducting their clown routines. Reviews of the show fail to mention if a third clown was hired to replace Bill Lake's vacancy.

The 1869 season ended in Memphis with a show two days before Christmas. Gil Robinson praised Agnes's ability as a manager and wrote in his memoir, "Mrs. Lake's success as a circus owner and manager was remarkable and the show became a gold mine under her direction." 11

The Missouri *Republican* in St. Louis remarked that while the troupe was under her command it had "made the tour of Arkansas, Mississippi, and part of Tennessee, clearing over \$20,000 [about \$298,000 today]." ¹²

In January 1870, Agnes arranged for Bill Lake to be reburied in Cincinnati. His coffin was followed by an elaborate funeral cortege that numbered over forty carriages and wagons--undoubtedly an impressive turnout. In February, Agnes decided to start the 1870-1871 season with a scaled-back program featuring only the best horses, a simplified roster, and a shorter touring schedule. Agnes returned to Memphis where she held an auction near Elmwood Cemetery that included 40 ring horses, 80 baggage horses, 1 band chariot, 12 spangled banners; and miscellaneous items such as chandeliers, plows, sledge-hammers, harnesses, trunks, and cages. Some of the ring stock for sale was labeled as the favorite mounts of some of the popular riders including Agnes and Emma Lake, and Minnie Marks.

Details of the 1870 season route are scarce, since there are only a few confirmed dates when Lake's Hippo-Olympiad performed. The roster is largely unknown and only a few newspapers have survived that provide a glimpse of Agnes's activities. We do know that she added a new element to her circus, as reported by the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*: the "grand balloon ascension, which in itself will repay [patrons] for the Visit." ¹³

During the early months of 1871 Agnes and her troupe stayed in the South, making stands in Alabama, Georgia, and Florida. Traveling sometimes by boat, but mostly in conventional circus wagons, Agnes Lake's Hippo-Olympiad navigated the familiar terrain. She recruited Robert E. J. Miles, an experienced manager, as the General Director to handle many of the logistics for booking performances. ¹⁴

That season the *New York Clipper* reported a robust roster for Madame Lake's Hippo-Olympiad that included Emma Lake and Minnie Marks as riders, Charles Lowery, Don Ricardo, and the Lazelle Brothers as tumblers, and Hi Marks and John Davenport as the "jester"and "trick clown." Emma Lake introduced horses that she had trained hersqlf into her performances. Agnes Lake performed in the man6ge act, the "high school" type of riding, on her familiar steed "Robert E. Lee," alongside several performers on horseback. The season officially ended for Agnes Lake's Hippo-Olympiad on February 24, 1871 with a performance in Atlanta.

When the 1871-1872 season commenced, twenty-six circuses--including John Robinson's Great Combination Circus & Menagerie as well as Van Amburgh's Menagerie--were making the rounds of American towns. Agnes was the only woman leading a troupe.

Agnes Lake's roster was the smallest she had ever employed: only fifty men and thirty-two horses. Though small in number the roster was anything but diminutive in talent or reputation. Emma Lake was joined by John Saunders, the "English rider and leaper," ¹⁶ and Master Orrin. ¹⁷ Agnes's roster included Levi North as the eques-

trian director, heavy balancer George Mankin, John Davenport and Lew Ginger headling clowns, George Richards who juggled cannon balls, and the family of gymnasts known as the Kincade Brothers. 18



Poster of balloon ascension. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZC4-10308.

The 1871 show season started in April and over two dozen companies fanned out over the nation in a race to entertain the masses. The "20th Annual Tour of Lake's Hippo-Olympiad," as it was now billed, started in Dayton, Ohio, on April 13. For two months, Agnes and her troupe kept a steady course in Ohio and Illinois.

Agnes Lake continued the exciting new feature of her company's repertoire: the free balloon ascension prior to the main event! The late circus historian Bob Parkinson studied the additions of balloon ascensions in circuses after 1870. He noted that balloon ascensions gained popularity in traveling shows when the post-bellum circus crowds demanded newer and more exciting exhibitions. According to circus historian William Slout the balloon ascensions replaced the "traditional wire-walking act" ¹⁹ before each show that had been a circus staple for many years.

Some American outfits were established for the sole purpose of exhibiting balloon ascensions, including O. K. Harrison's Balloon Ascension and the Ericsson Hydrogen Balloon Company that toured parts of the country in the $1850s.^{20}$

Parkinson believed that the balloon ascension was suddenly reinvigorated in late 1870 when a French statesman Leon Gambetta escaped from Paris via balloon when Prussian armies invaded the city. His flight spawned immense publicity as the first balloon excursion with a pre-determined destination, and subsequently influenced dozens of American circuses the following year. French-inspired names adorned the balloons in nearly every circus--the James Robinson Circus labeled their balloon "The City of Paris"—and the vast majority of the aeronauts' names were prefixed with "Monsieur."

Agnes Lake, like her colleagues G. G. Grady and John Robinson, was acutely aware of current entertainment trends and the public's persistent hunger for thrilling exhibitions, and she eagerly added this spectacle to her circus. Spread out on her circus lot, a giant canvas, "a real Paris balloon," was carefully inflated. The aeronaut would climb into the basket, release the ropes securing the vessel, and the balloon would gently ease into the sky, up to a few hundred feet above the amazed spectators. Under the navigation of Agnes's "celebrated aeronaut," Professor Miles, "who [had] made a thousand aerial voyages," the balloon would gently float above the crowds before descending to earth, landing as soft as a feather. 22 That was the plan anyway.

Unfortunately there were dozens of balloon mishaps. The majority of reports detailed only minor calamities for Agnes's Hippo-Olympiad, such as the incident in Quincy, Illinois: "After a great deal of waiting and watching and speculation as to whether the thing would be much of an affair, after all, during which time the canvass was being made red hot, the balloon made a'go' of it, sailing upward a short distance.... Inside of five minutes that 'air ship' came down in a heap in a pond of water three feet deep. ... And that was all. ²³

A similar incident occurred when Agnes and her circus were in Manhattan, Kansas, and the balloon was reported as "busted" after failing to take flight during the afternoon show. After successfully taking off later the same evening, it careened into "Sarber's woods, about half a mile from the place of ascension." 24 The crowds were not impressed. On another occasion, the "acrobatic aeronaut" introduced his gymnastic feats but "was violently thrown upon his side by the wiggling of the balloon, disjointing his arm and injuring him severely." 25

"Monsieur" Miles had his own share of disconcerting moments as Agnes's "celebrated aeronaut." In Kansas, he was not even in the basket when "the balloon seemed to shoot off before there was a good ready. The 'ship of air' turned a complete somersault ... and caught fire. The Fire was speedily extinguished; so was the balloon." ²⁶

Tragically, some balloon mishaps turned into devastating catastrophes, and there was at least one death attributed to a balloon ascension gone awry in Agnes's company.

Even though the balloon sometimes failed to inflate properly, flew off-course and crashed, or occasionally injured aeronauts or patrons, these were risks Agnes and other proprietors were willing to accept. The novelty of a colossal balloon exhibited free to the public was a marketing maneuver that paid off handsomely in the day's profits, and Agnes continued to employ it through the rest of the season.

By 1850 there were over 30,000 miles of railroad track in the United States, but the railroads did not standardized equipment or track gauges until after the Civil War. Additionally, the lack of suitable train cars for circuses made loading and unloading the equipment strenuous and challenging, especially when the show's site was not next to the depot.²⁷

Rosters of post Civil War railroad circuses had been streamlined to feature only the most profitable acts since travel by railroad was often unpredictable. Menageries and sideshows were frequently eliminated because these added too many unpredictable factors on a nascent transportation structure. The lack of a parade, museum, menagerie, and sideshow led to the belief that a railroad circus presented an inferior production to a traditional overland circus. To reassure their potential markets, several overland troupes added "This is no Railroad Show" to their advertisements.²⁸

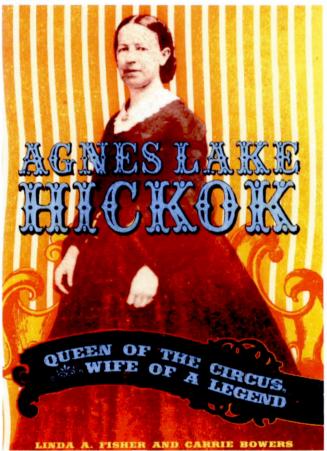
Circus historian Fred Dahlinger, Jr., in a four-part study titled "The Development of the Railroad Circus," in several issues of Bandwagon in 1983 and 1984, studied the economic rewards and logistical challenges that beset the circuses that attempted to complete an entire season by rail. He theorized that a railroad show may have cost less than a mud show because there were no baggage horses to stable and feed, and hotel bills were drastically reduced since performers could sleep while the train rolled into the next town.²⁹ The fewer long-term expenditures made a railroad show appealing to its owners. With the lack of a menagerie or side show to generate additional income, however, the railroad shows were completely dependent upon large audiences for their revenue. Early railroad shows were an enormous gamble since the circus companies ventured into the West where population centers were sporadic.

Janet M. Davis examined "the circus's rising ubiquity [as] a symbol of national expansion and consolidation during the Gilded Age." After the historic meeting in Promontory Summit, Utah on May 10, 1869 when the coasts of the country were united by rail, the railroad industry rapidly standardized track gauges to facilitate travel. Since the circus equipment no longer had to be reloaded onto new cars to fit each track gauge, this meant that circuses and menageries no longer had to sacrifice the parade, museum, or sideshow, commodities that were once deemed burdensome for railroad shows. And as railroad travel became easier the overland wagon shows consequently became obsolete over the next several years.

By 1870, however, only a few circuses had attempted to use the railroads as their sole conveyance during the circus season but Agnes knew there was a great opportunity to make money in the West by harnessing the power of the railroads. Agnes prepared her troupe for the new season just as she normally did, with advance agents and local logistical support, and undoubtedly eagerly awaited the beginning of the season.

By the middle of May 1871, Agnes Lake's

Hippo-Olympiad was "traveling by railroad through Nebraska ... and [had] done a fair business," reported the New York Clipper. 31 Agnes's solid reputation preceded her and several newspapers including the Junction City Union in Kansas praised her talented performers. The Fort Dodge (Iowa) Times declared that Madame Lake's Hippo-Olympiad "was the most respectable and orderly Circus that has ever visited ... it was not accompanied by the usual army of gamblers, thieves, pickpockets, prostitutes and vagabonds that generally follow a Circus. 32 Agnes Lake continued to pride herself in producing family entertainment, free from vulgarity. After the death of Bill Lake, she was determined to make her circus legitimate and "honorable [as] an occupation, [such] as the museum or drama,"33 or she claimed that she would abandon it.



The cover of Agnes Lake Hickok Queen of the Circus, Wife Of A Legend. Book to be published in March 2009.

Few respectable business opportunities were available to women in the nineteenth century, and Agnes did not want to be pitied because she was a widow. Instead she wanted to prove that a woman could operate a business outside the widow's traditional milieu (such as a boardinghouse), without having her morals questioned as if she was a madam running a traveling brothel. The *Neosho Times* in Missouri reminded their readers that "the many traditional vices connected with exhibitions of this kind (pickpockets, tramps, and vagabonds) found no favor in the eyes of the Madam"³⁴ and her only revenue

was derived from the ticket sales.

Even though the trains prevented access to much smaller towns, hundreds of people traveled into the nearest venues when they heard Madame Lake was coming. According to the 1870 census, Idaho City, Colorado, had about 700 residents; yet nearly 2,000 people came out to see Agnes Lake's circus in June 1871.

Circus Day remained a community-wide event, even if some of the local authorities discouraged its presence. The newspaper in Salina, Kansas reported that "a circus draws a bigger mass of beings than a fourth of July celebration, Henry Ward Beecher, or Cady Stanton." The editors took delight in noticing that many "stately and dignified" citizens--who no doubt lambasted the circus's arrival a few days earlier--entered the arena "with hats slouched over their eyes afraid to be recognized." 37



Spadling & Rogers's advertisement, circa 1857. Collection of Linda A. Fisher.

The residents of Greeley, Colorado, who "don't drink anything much stronger than ginger pop and lemonade," discouraged any outsiders that might pose a threat to the tranquility of their hamlet or who might corrupt their youth, and thus "pollute the fair soil of Greeley colony, by drunken revelries. . . . "38 Despite the negative opinions that saturated newspapers and the disapproving looks from the town leaders, hundreds of citizens made their way to the closest venues on Circus Day. Lake's performance at Evans, Colorado, had "almost the entire population of [nearby] Greeley" in attendance, despite the fact that the Hippo-Olympiad had been forced out of that town and was considered "an abomination to the Greeleyites" ³⁹ by the newspaper editors. ⁴⁰ Colorado was especially profitable for Agnes Lake and her show, generating about \$13,000 (about \$206,000 today) in June alone.

In Victorian America, women were considered the "light of the home," the keeper of morals, and the religious conductor for the family. Janet M. Davis noted that circuses "celebrated female power" and represented "a startling alternative to contemporary social norms."41 Despite the negative attitudes surrounding circuses, Agnes Lake--by managing her own show--challenged Victorian stereotypes but was not censured for it. Rather,

she was redeemed as a phoenix rising to overcome the hardships of being a widow while not faltering from the barometer of Victorian womanhood. Agnes Lake's status as a circus owner began to eclipse the average woman's ranking as a second class citizen. She owned property, not only the circus itself but also several acres of land in Kentucky, and managed much of her show's daily operations and fiscal responsibilities. The Topeka Daily Commercial published a social commentary on women in 1871, hailing Agnes Lake's fortitude: "There are few women, we imagine, who labor under the delusion that they could manage a circus. We know the fair sex have an idea that they can do anything within the range of human possibilities, and confidently refer us to the examples of Joan of Arc ... [or] Dr. Mary Walker⁴² to show how equally with men women have distinguished themselves in the arts of peace and war ... what must be thought of the one who embarks for all in the most precarious of all enterprises, and with a few lieutenants and a score or so of retainers, sets out with a dreary prospect before her, to travel in all kinds of weather, through hundreds of miles of alternating dust and mud, to run a dreadful gauntlet of uncompromising sheriffs, and to fight her way back to the place of starting, richer in purse than she was before? Is not her heroism sublime? Does she not call for our best wishes, and for our most fervent prayers for her success? Such a woman is Madam Agnes Lake ... [at the death of Bill Lake] the entire management of the concern devolved upon her, although but a woman, her administration has ever since been so successful that she now has one of the best circuses in the country."43

Throughout the rest of the season, Agnes Lake received praise not just for the acts her show provided, but for her ability to manage a show, *despite* her sex. She was not the poster woman for "woman's rights in the ordinary acceptation of that term," argued the *Saline County Journal*, but when Bill Lake was murdered "she rose superior to her desolation, and with a heroism that commands our admiration, addressed ... the responsible duties of her strange position." 44

The Nebraska City News proclaimed that Agnes's management was superb and that she conducted herself "in a business like and lady like manner." ⁴⁵ In June 1871, the Laramie, Wyoming Territory Daily Sentinel stroked Agnes's ego, defended her company, and pronounced she "a lady of refinement and culture." Affirming their own belief in women's second-class citizenship, however, the editors wrote, "To her the undertaking was novel and arduous, but with a determination that would honor the sterner sex, she has proved woman's adaptability to control and manage any occupation that circumstances may make imperative for her to undertake--with a heroic resolve to free the circus from many of its traditional vices--she has succeeded in making it a respectable and at the same time legitimate business." ⁴⁶

By October 1871, advertisements for Agnes Lake's Hippo-Olympiad removed any doubt as to who was running the show, the first line of the ads boldly pronounced" UNDER A WOMAN'S MANAGEMENT." The *Terra Haute Daily Gazette* proudly boasted "SIX FEMALE ARTISTS" among the forty featured performers. The idea of pro-

moting the female performers' strength and agility, mixed with their natural womanliness, was not a novel marketing concept to Agnes Lake. Nearly two decades before, while she traveled with Spalding & Rogers, Agnes's image was routinely featured in one of the major advertisements. She was illustrated ascending her slack wire outside of the big top before the main event, pushing a wheelbarrow with an occupant, just as the program promised. The wheelbarrow's occupant was a representation of "Lady Liberty" holding an American flag, surrounded by the Spalding & Rogers's logo. Agnes Lake was depicted in a modest costume. What better way to show female modesty and strength than with Agnes Lake, a performer whose athleticism never obscured her femininity?

Eighteen-seventy-one was a significant year in Agnes Lake's professional life. She conducted a financially successful season with her name at the helm, and traveled nearly the entire season by railroad to some of the farthest towns in the United States.

This was an important year for both circus history and for Agnes Lake, but it was by no means her last success. Her future still held more years of love, tragedy, and professional acclaim.

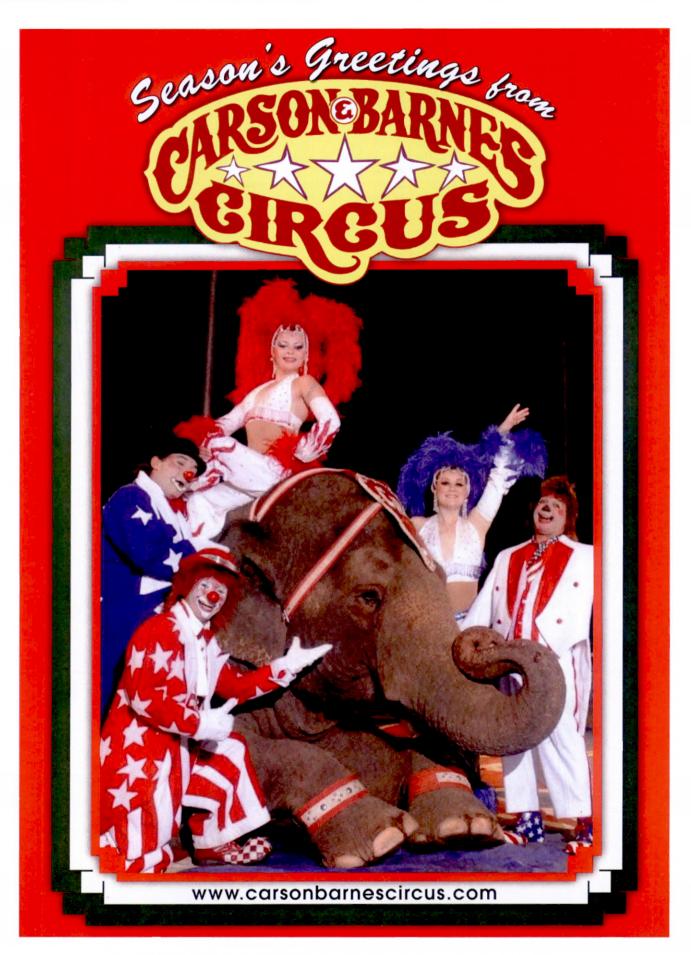
ENDNOTES

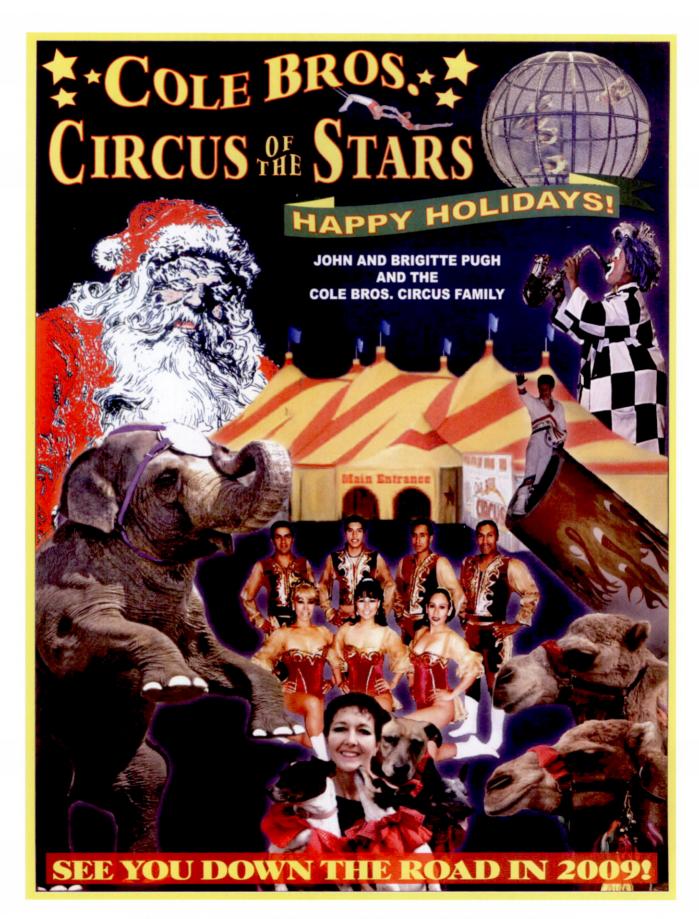
- 1. Columbus (Ga.) Daily Enquirer, 24-31 December 1868; Daily Sun (Columbus, Ga.), 3, 5 January 1869.
 - 2. Daily Sun (Columbus, Ga.), 5 January 1869.
 - 3. Cartersville (Ga.) Express, 15, 22, 28 April 1869.
 - 4. Central Georgian (Sandersville, Ga.), 3 March 1869.
 - 5. Marietta (Ga.) Daily Journal, 23 April 1869.
- 6. The Spring River Fountain (Mount Vernon, Mo.), 26 August, 1869
- For the sake of clarity, the most consistent spelling of his surname is used.
 - 8. Sedalia (Mo.) Weekly Bazoo, 31 August 1869.
- 9. *Ibid.* "A Mr. Thompson" is not identified--most likely he was a citizen of Granby and a witness to the initial encounter between Killian and Bill Lake.
- 10. Robinson, Gilbert N. Old Wagon Show Days. (Cincinnati: Brockwell, 1925), 129.
 - 11. Ibid., 130.

- 12. Missouri Republican (St. Louis), 21 January 1870.
- 13. Times-Picayune (New Orleans), 31 December 1870.
- 14. Slout, William L., Olympians of the Sawdust Circle, (San Bernardino, California: Borgo Press, 1998), 206.
 - 15. New York Clipper, 14 January 1871.
 - 16. Slout, ibid., 267.
 - 17. Possibly Orrin M. Hollis.
- 18. New York Clipper, 4 March 1871; Slout, ibid., 156. According to Slout, the brothers toured with Van Amburgh in 1871 but the family might have changed employers half-way through the season.
- 19. Slout, William L. "En Route to the Great Eastern," Bandwagon 50, no. 3, (May-June 2006), 32.
- 20. Scarnehorn, Howard L., Balloons to Jets: A Century of Aeronautics in Illinois, 1855-1955. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 2000), 6-8.
- 21. Parkinson, Robert "Circus Balloon Ascensions," Bandwagon 5, no. 2 (March-April), 1961: 3-6.
 - 22. Nebraska City News, 6 May 1871.
 - 23. The Daily Quincy (Ill.) Herald, 5 May 1871.
 - 24. The Nationalist (Manhattan, Kans.), 4 August 1871.
 - 25. The Daily Nonpareil (Council Bluffs, Iowa), 16 May 1871.
 - 26. Saline County (Kans.) Journal, 3 August 1871.
- 27. Davis, Janet M. *The Circus Age: Culture and Society Under the American Big Top.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 19.
 - 28. Ibid., 7.
 - 29. Ibid., 8.
 - 30. Ibid., 22. See also 11-12, 19-25, 77-79.
 - 31. New York Clipper, 27 May 1871.
 - 32. Fort Dodge (Iowa) Times, 1 June 1871.
 - 33. Nebraska City News, 6 May 1871.
 - 34. The Neosho (Mo.) Times, 24, 29 August 1871.
 - 35. Colorado Miner (Georgetown, Colo.), 19, 22 June 1871.
 - 36. Saline County (Kans.) Journal, 3 August 1871.
 - 37. Ibid.
 - 38. Cheyenne Daily Leader, 16 June 1871.
 - 39. Ibid.
 - 40. Ibid., 26 July 1871.
 - 41. Davis, op. cit., 83.
- 42. Dr. Mary Edwards Walker (1832-1919) was the first female recipient of the Medal of Honor (awarded in 1865), in recognition of her work as a surgeon during the Civil War.
 - 43. Topeka Daily Commercial, 1 August 1871.
 - 44. Saline County (Kans.) Journal, 27 July 1871.
 - 45. Nebraska City News, 6 May 1871.
 - 46. Laramie (Wyo.) Daily Sentinel, 23 June 1871.

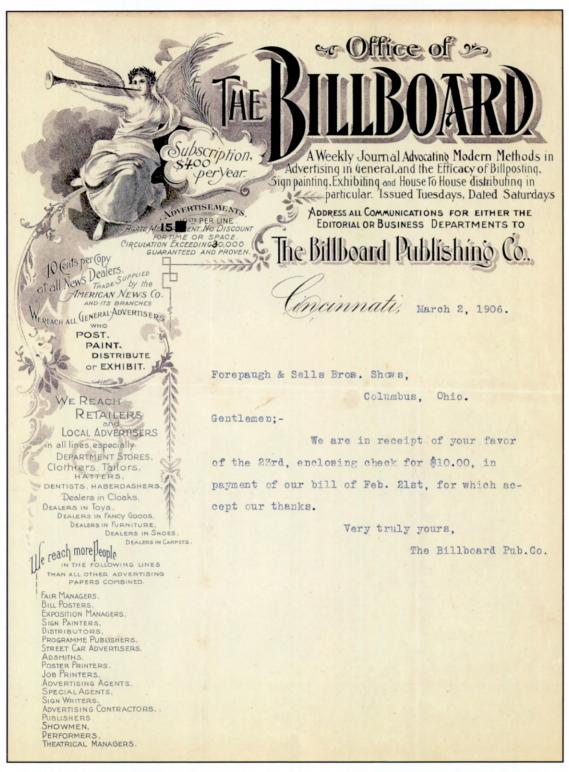
Holiday Greetings

From Your CHS Officers
Robert F. Sabia, President
Judith Griffin, Vice President
Joe Parker, Treasurer
Bob Cline, Secretary

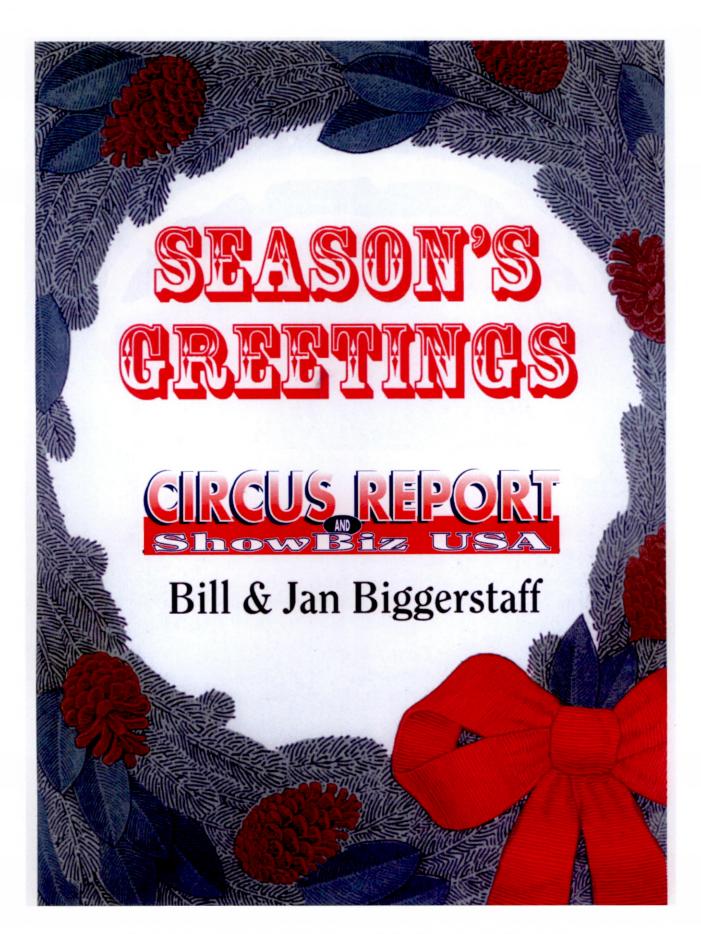




Bill Kasiska's Letterheads



Published from 1894 to 1960, the *Billboard* was the most influential and best trade journal the outdoor show business ever had. Called Billy Boy, the Chump Educator, and most famously the Showman's Bible, the magazine had recently overtaken the venerable *New York Clipper* as the circus industry's paper of record.



The Ringling Celebrates Circus!



Don't miss all the great activities and events January 24 as we celebrate Circus!

10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Jan. 24 & 25 **Circus Model Builder's Exhibition**

Learn about miniature circus models from the craftsmen who make them

10:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Family Friendly Festivities

For children of all ages

1:00 p.m.

Howard Tibbals Booksigning

Meet the man behind the model – purchase the definitive book on the *Howard Bros. Circus Model*

2:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Circus Music Concert

Windjammer's Unlimited

Circus music from the early 20th century

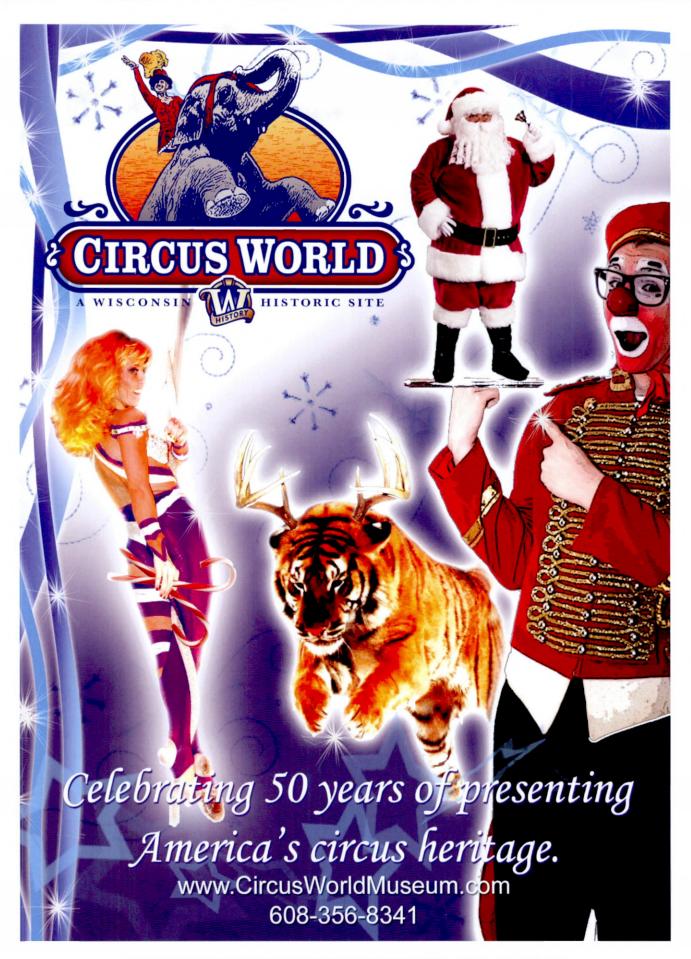
All activities are first come, first served and are included in the price of admission. Programs are subject to change.



WWW.RINGLING.ORG

5401 BAY SHORE ROAD, SARASOTA • 941.359.5700 OPEN 10 A.M. - 5:30 P.M., SEVEN DAYS A WEEK Closed New Year's Day, Thanksgiving & Christmas

Paid for in part by Sarasota County Tourist Development Tax revenues. Exhibitions and related programs are also funded in part by grants from the State of Florida, Florida Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, The Florida Arts Council, Sarasota County Arts Council, the Sarasota County Tourist Development Council, and the Sarasota Board of County Commissioners.







WARMEST SEASON'S CREETINGS

To All Circus Historical Society Members

from

Circus City Festival, Inc.

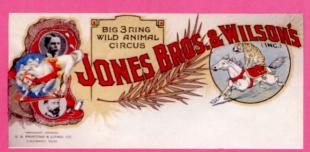
See you in Peru, Indiana on July 11 thru July 18, 2009 One of Americans oldest and biggest Amateur Circuses Longest running circus parade in the US – July 18

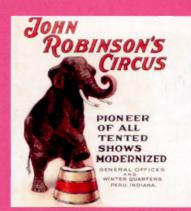
> Celebrating our 50th Year SEE YOU AT THE CIRCUS!

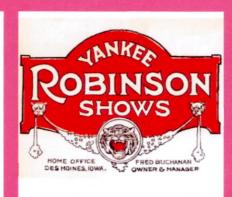
GIRCUS FAMILIOPES

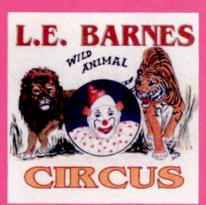
Circuses have always used fancy and colorful letterheads. The same is true of the envelopes used for mailing. Some shows used their letterhead designs. Others used adaptations of the designs. Both the letterheads and the envelopes were furnished free by the lithograph companies to large users of their posters. All from the Pfening Archives.



















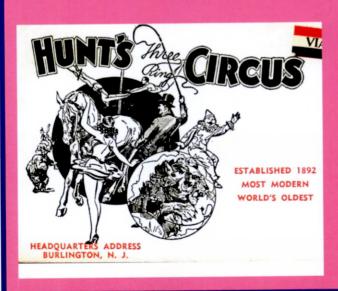








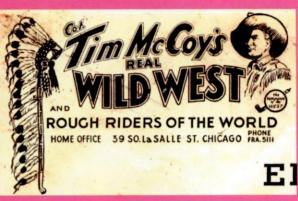








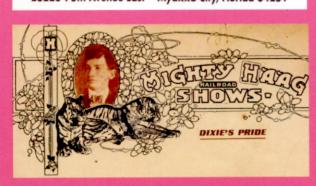




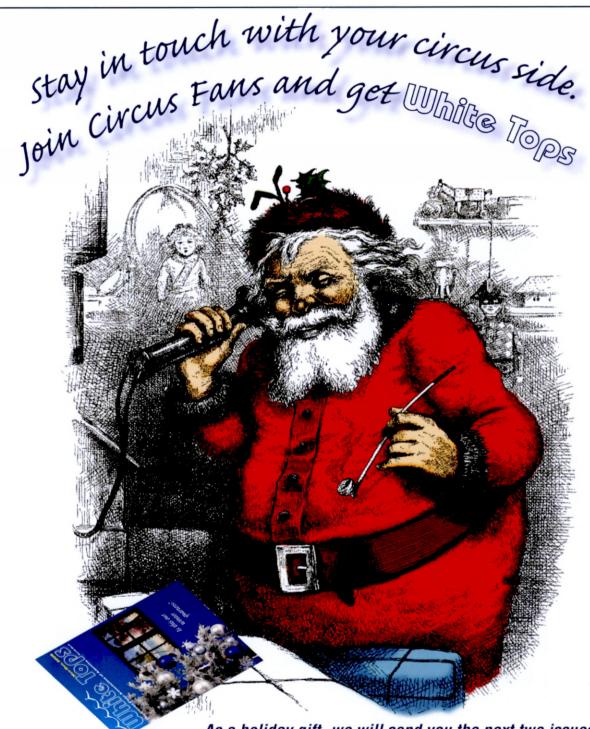






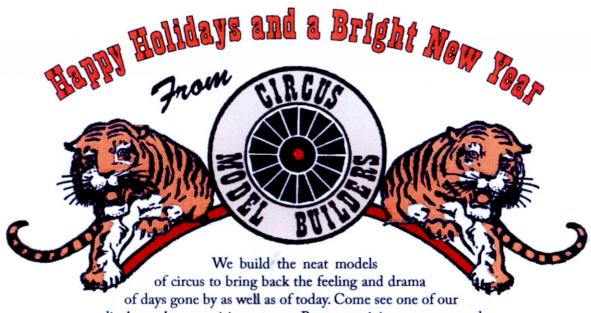






As a holiday gift, we will send you the next two issues of White Tops so you can sample our coverage of comtemporary circus in all its wonder and joy. Send your request by email to <whitetops@columbus.rr.com> or call us at 614-261-0454.

If you like the magazine, join the Circus Fans Association of America to continue by visiting <circusfans.org> and clicking the "JOIN US" button or return the mail back on the cover of each issue.



of days gone by as well as of today. Come see one of our displays when we visit near you. Better yet, join our group and receive the *Little Circus Wagon* magazine. It's all new and improved with color and interesting articles on modeling, model shows, and great pictures of circus models and real circus – from all eras.







Do you enjoy circus music?

If so, your interest in the circus suggests that you should consider membership in Windjammers Unlimited, Inc. This group is made up of musicians and fans for the purpose of keeping traditional circus music alive through performances and education.

Conventions are held twice a year; every January we meet in Sarasota and in July we meet somewhere else. In Sarasota we'll perform at the Ringling Museum, PAL Sailor Circus and even at the cemetery to honor Merle Evans.

This year mark your calendar for January 20-25, 2009 and July 21-26, 2009 when we'll be in Naperville, IL.

Membership includes six issues of the Windjammers publication, *Circus Fanfare*. We are a 501(c)3 IRS educational charity. Donations are tax deductible.

Windjammers Membership Application

Name	☐ Individual at \$30.00
Address	Family at \$37.00
City State Zip	Please mail applications to
Instrument (if performing member)	Windjammers Unlimited % Mike Montgomery
Phone	
Email	Independence, OH 44131-0145
Please copy this form if you need additi	

MURDER ON DAILEY BROS. CIRCUS

-OR WAS IT?

BY LANE TALBURT

Copyright 2008

Author's Note: While conducting research for a series of Bandwagon stories on Norma Davenport Cristiani and her parents' Dailey Bros. Circus of the 1940s, the writer came across vague references to an alleged murder on the show during its 1948 tour. Through information recently provided by Dailey Bros. alumni and a search of the internet, this story has emerged for the first time.

"You're all under arrest!"

With that boisterous summons, some 25 lawmen simultaneously burst into Coach 98, one of six musty sleeping cars of the Dailey Bros. Circus train on a late autumn Saturday night in 1948.

Jarred by the sudden break in, German born Hilda Sanders, wife of stilt walker Charles Sanders, lurched from her curtained berth in the performers' sleeper and began screaming, "The Nazis are going to kill us!"

A recent immigrant to the United States who joined Dailey Bros. for the 1948 season, Mrs. Sanders had been traumatized by Adolph Hitler's brutal rise to power in the 1930s, points out Ward Hall, then a ventriloquist in the sideshow. Hall and the Sanders couple were among more than 300 circus employees being rounded up for a post midnight trip to the Springfield, Missouri, hoosegow.

Before allowing the 24-car circus train (another car was being used that season in advance) and its tightly packed cargo to depart from their jurisdiction, Springfield and Greene County officials wanted to address a lot of unanswered questions about the mysterious death of a teen-age prop hand. The body of William "Butch" Petit literally had dropped into their hands when the show arrived in the Southwestern Missouri city on Saturday morning, October 23, to set up for two performances.

To most kinkers and workmen, being hauled off to jail was just another lark. After all, a grift laden nomadic enterprise like Dailey Bros. experienced frequent encounters with the authorities, especially those who hadn't been paid off by the circus fixer. And Springfield officers, who previously welcomed free tickets and a little cash here and there in exchange for looking the other way at the show's gambling activities, were anything but circus friendly on that day.

"They took us all to the slammer," remembers Gerry Philippus, a "bally broad" on the show who playfully taunted her inquisitors during the after-hours gathering. "I want to sit on someone's lap," Gerry recalls telling married officers. Ms. Philippus, now retired in South Carolina, palled around on the show with featured performer Norma Davenport.

Even Norma's father, show owner Ben Davenport, got into the ruse of playing possum during the intensive but inconclusive interrogations, recalls Norma Davenport Cristiani, who, at age 78, is still actively booking circuses from her home in Sarasota, Florida.

While in police custody, Davenport whispered into Norma!s ears, "Don't worry, I'm not sick, but I'm going to tell them I have a heart problem."

With that, the 49-year-old showman lay down on a police station table and began to moan. Officers quickly released Davenport, who was recovering from a near death bout with typhoid fever, allowing him to return to

the family car on the train, Norma laughs in a recent phone conversation.



Perhaps the air of frivolity insulated circus folks from the reality of death, which was omnpresent, reminds Ward Hall. Accidents in the performing arena, in the circus backyard, and on the train were fairly commonplace.

Only weeks before the Springfield inci-

dent, Ed Julius, a member of the canvas crew, had been killed by a passing train in Liberal, Kansas. Julius's name was among the five employee deaths listed in the official post season report issued by Dailey Bros.

The 1948 route book, however, did not mention Butch Petit or the circumstances surrounding his death. Nor did the circus bible, *Billboard*, publish any information on the young worker's demise. And in his 1970 series in *Bandwagon* on Dailey Bros., circus historian Leland Antes Jr. dismissed "rumors" of a alleged killing on the show with this notation: "Nuf said."

Following a preliminary investigation of Petit's death, the verdict of a coroner's jury in Springfield was inconclusive, thus leading to the release of the rest of the prop crew. With prop boss Oscar Dennis, they returned to the circus in Joplin, Missouri. Within days the publicity died out, and the incident was largely forgotten—at least by circus people. Springfield investigators, on the other hand, refused to let the case go by the boards.

Until early 1950, that is, when a show mechanic and wagon driver belatedly turned himself in not far from the circus winter quarters in Central Texas and pleaded guilty



to a charge of second degree murder in a Barton County court in Lamar, Missouri, where this strange, twisting tale begins.

Even today, questions remain concerning Petit's death and the subsequent confession. Surviving performers Norma Davenport Cristiani, Ward Hall and Gerry Philippus dredged up their memories of events surrounding the Springfield investigation, but were unable to recall or respond to a description of the deceased worker.

Those crucial details came from three primary sources: The archives of the *Springfield News-Leader*; an undated account by a 75 -year-old ex-Dailey Bros. prop hand on the internet web site "Sideshow World;" and a July 1950 cover story in *Front Page Detective* magazine, provided by Gerry Philippus from her stash of circus memorabilia.

Discrepancies persist among the three accounts. The best description of the young victim and events surrounding his death comes from Hurley B. Carlisle, who penned the undated internet story. Carlisle was identified as "H. B. Carlis" in the caption below the photo of the prop crew in the 1948 route book.

Carlisle remembered Butch Petit as "a big blonde guy of 18 who had cultivated a blonde mustache. He was a nice looking kid, but he looked sort of strange because he was so blonde."

In his "Sideshow World" article, probably written in the late 1990s or early 2000s, Carlisle recalls that Petit and a friend, Chester Somers, "had been around for several weeks. They had come from Robbins Brothers Circus, a truck show. Butch had been on the Dailey show the year before. in 1947."

The cover of the July 1950 Front Page Detective magazine. Author's Collection.

According to Carlisle's later day account, Petit had taken the day off on Friday, October 22, 1948, when the circus train arrived in Lamar (President Harry Truman's birthplace), to celebrate his 19th birthday." I don't think Butch was on the lot [at Lamar] during the day. He was probably drinking downtown, for booze was expensive on the lot or on the train."

Dailey Bros. erected a "G-top" on each lot, where workers could gamble with grifters or buy liquor when they were not otherwise occupied. In addition, the pie car on the circus train carried a bountiful line of alcoholic bev-

erages and slot machines. As Carlisle pointed out, "we got paid every night at the finish of our work. The boss [Oscar Dennis] would give us a ticket which we would take to the pie car. The payroll lady [identified as Bertha Drane by Ms. Cristiani] there paid prop men \$2.50."

Carlisle recalled seeing Petit "staggering around while we were tearing down the trampoline," from an act featuring Corky Plunkett assisted by Norma, who had married Plunkett in early 1948, during the 8:00 p.m. performance. The autumn sun having already set hours before, the circus backyard would have been shrouded in darkness.

"We were busy.... Our work was concentrated and very highly organized. We lost sight of Butch and had no time to check on him, even though he was a well liked member of the crew. He was a loose cannon on a circus lot on teardown night, and on his own.

"We finished the teardown and went to the train about the time that they dropped the big top. We assumed Butch was in the pie car drinking, or at a bar.

"In Springfield the next morning when I got to the runs [where wagons were unloaded from flat cars at the end of the circus train], I learned Butch was found dead in our prop wagon No. 41. His body was covered with a tarp. I

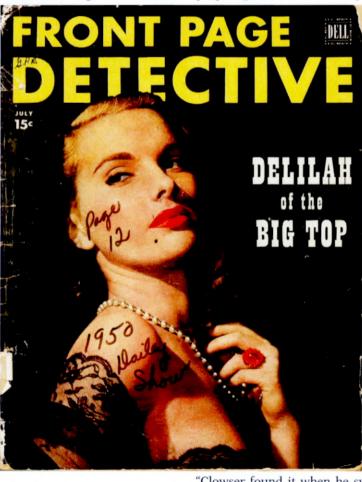
think one of our train crew must have discovered him when he climbed onto the wagon to handle the brake."

Carlisle described the prop wagon as having high sides but no top. I guess the train crew man—circus train crew, not RR employees—must have yelled at him to awaken him but poor Butch was dead."

While there was no doubt that the worker had been found lifeless, questions remained, then and now, concerning the exact causes and location of Petit's death and whether his body was discovered on the train or on the lot in Springfield.

According to the 1950 account in *Front Page Detective*, Petit's body was discovered on the Springfield fairgrounds lot by another young prop hand, Madison Clowser (also pictured in the 1948 circus route book).

"Clowser found it when he swung open the truck's rear wooden doors and grabbed hold of a mat that had been stowed away. He unrolled the dirty blanket and rubber-covered wrestling mat [likely used in the after show] and stood stock still, staring down at the dead



man....

"The once ruggedly handsome face was familiar—it was that of Butch Petit. But now, crusted with blood and the sandy hair matted with cinders, the corpse was a repulsive sight."

The immediate response by the Dailey Bros. community was to close ranks and, as Gerry Philippus recalls the orders from owner Davenport, to "dummy up, dummy up."

Apparently, not everybody got the word. Legal adjuster M. R. "Mickey" O'Brien was unaware of the death when he left the lot on Saturday morning to fix the date with Springfield cops. According to the *Front Page Detective* article, O'Brien's visit at the sheriffs office was interrupted by prop boss Oscar Dennis's phone call to report the discovery of Petit's body.

"Your timing's perfect," the sheriff said coldly, "but you can shove those passes back in your pocket. We don't fix murder in Greene County!"

The sheriff was miffed that the body had been discovered on the lot about 10:00 a.m., but the phone call to authorities was delayed by a half hour. This differed from prop hand Carlisle's account, which stated that a trainman had uncovered Petit's body while Wagon 41 was still on the flat car.

During the initial on-site investigation police and sheriffs deputies were joined by the country coroner, prosecuting attorney and the Missouri state highway patrol. The coroner apparently found Petit's body "still partly wrapped in the filthy cocoon" on the prop wagon. Butch was wearing the white coveralls worn by all members of the prop gang identifying them as representatives of the Casey Candy Company. In addition to their ring duties, the crew also helped out with the candy pitch during each performance.

Petit's face was caked with dried blood from the ears, and his uniform bore scuff marks. The coroner noted that Petit had suffered a skull fracture but demurred on the cause of death pending an autopsy and the findings of a coroner's jury

Under questioning, prop boss Dennis apparently admitted that he had fired Petit the night before at Lamar but adamantly denied any role in the death. He also was unable to identify the person or persons who placed Petit in the prop wagon before it was driven to the train by the wagon driver, identified as "Mac." Yet to be determined officially was whether Petit was alive when hoisted into the wagon at Lamar or whether the workman died while the train was en route to Springfield.

Word of the discovery of Petit's body spread quickly among the prop and big top crews. Others apparently remained unaware as the day wore on.

Ben Davenport and George Smith, the ex-Ringling executive who had joined Dailey Bros. earlier in the season, were intent on getting the tent city raised. Norma Davenport did not learn of the death until she awakened after 9:00 a.m. Saturday in family car 100. A porter whom she remembers only as Tony told her, "Miss Norma, they found a body at the lot."

By the time Norma was gillied to the lot in the show station wagon late in the morning, Petit's lifeless form had been removed from the prop wagon, along with its contents, which included the performers' dressing tent.

Norma, still in her late teens, had her own theory about the injuries leading to Petit's death. She assumed that the young workman may have been kicked by one of two horses normally tied to Wagon 41 in the backyard at Lamar.

But almost no one in the circus family, Ms. Cristiani insists today, believed that Petit had been murdered.

"It was the most ridiculous thing I had ever seen in my life," Norma says of the investigation, which admittedly was hampered by show people being less than cooperative. "That's why we were all laughing" when local authorities began taking workers off the lot for questioning between the matinee and evening performances.

Ward Hall remembers learning of the prop hand's death as the afternoon show was progressing. "The sideshow was closed," Hall said in a June 2008 interview, almost 60 years after the fact. "We were waiting for the come out. I had gone to the grab joint to get a cup of coffee. And I was standing under the marquee of the sideshow, which is where the three legal adjusters had big comfortable chairs. One was sitting there.

"And I noticed there seemed to be a lot of policemen all around the lot, all day long. And I said to this gentleman [the fixer], 'My God, I've never seen so many cops around. It looks like a police convention around here today.'

"To which the fixer responded: 'Oh, that's on account of that murder.'

"That's the first time that I knew of it," Hall recalls. "I said, 'Murder? What murder?' And he said, 'Oh, one of the boys on the show, when they unrolled the big top this

morning, they found his body rolled up in the canvas."

Hall and his partner, Harry Leonard, knife thrower and Punch and Judy man in the sideshow, had returned to Dailey Bros. within the past several weeks after spending most of the season on a carnival sideshow.

M. R. "Mickey" O'Brien, Legal Adjuster.

Hall, who today partners with C. M. "Chris" Christ in the World of Wonders Sideshow, said he never met the deceased worker. "The only time we in the sideshow ever got around the backyard or back door was that year, when they decided to have all the sideshow people walk around in the spec."

Prop hand Carlisle, in his memoir,



recalled that, "the Springfield police started picking up all the male workers between the matinee and the night show. They might not have got everybody, but they got all of the prop department, Oscar Dennis (the boss) and all. I was picked up after the jail was all full. The night show went on as scheduled, even with the absence of most prop hands."

Ward Hall recalls going to the train pie car, Coach 90, for a late "lunch" during teardown. He then sauntered on down to the married couples' sleeper where he and Leonard climbed into their windowless berth.

Around midnight, before trainmaster Frank "Streamline" Fizzell could give orders to the Frisco engineer to I out, a performer in Hall's sleeper peered out at a line of eight to 10 vehicles pulling along trackside.

"There was no street out there," Hall remembers. "I said, 'Maybe it's a railroad crew going to do some work."

The young sideshow artist was quickly disabused of that notion. "It was just a few minutes more when someone burst in and hollered out, 'Everybody get dressed; you're all under arrest!'

"There were men that came in at both ends. They were very rude. They walked along [the aisle] and threw open the berth curtains, exposing the ladies."

In a nearby berth, German immigrant Hilda Sanders "started crying; she was so shaky," Hall recalls. "I said, 'What's, the matter, Hilda?' She said, 'Oh, my Gott, oh my Gott. It's like Hitler; they're going to kill us.' And I said, "They're not going to hurt you; you'll be alright."'

The combined task force swept the five Dailey Bros. sleepers, including the family car, loading everyone into cars or vans for the trip to the city jail.

"We had some Mexican families on the show," Hall says, "And they took the grandmas that were, like, 80 years old. And babies in arms and kids two, three, four years old."

Actually, not everyone went to jail. When officers walked unannounced into the family car, Ben Davenport's combative nature-and his intense disfor like law enforcement-kicked in. "He was furious," recalls his daughter, Norma Davenport Cristiani, who at the time was married to performer Corky Plunkett. "He told them, 'I'm going with you, but not my wife" Eva Davenport was still recover-

ing from mid-season emergency gall bladder surgery. Norma points out that her father had only returned to the show in recent weeks following his own life threatening bout of typhoid fever, the same disease that had killed his father prior to Ben's birth.

She, too, remembers officers circulating on the lot throughout the day on Saturday. "That night they started taking [workers] off the job. That's when it dawned on me that they were going to sleep at all night." Ms. Cristiani said the pie car may not have been open when the officers made their midnight raid, since "it had slot machines" for employees' after-hours enjoyment.

For the most part, Dailey Bros. personnel made light of their jailhouse experience. The women were quartered in an upstairs library at the police station; owner Davenport was directed to a downstairs office, and male performers and workers were herded into what appeared to be a large laundry room in the basement.

"There was no putting you into a jail cell or anything like that," Hall says.

"Nobody knew what was happening. And I made a couple of what I thought were rather humorous remarks. And Fred Brad, he was head of the nut mob, said, Ward, this is not funny. This is something that is very serious."

Showgirl Gerry Philippus recalls that while en route to the jail she and pals Norma and Rosemary Stock were cutting up with the deputies when a manager told them to "cut that shit out. Don't say anything to anybody."

Hall and ex-prop hand Hurley Carlisle distinctly remember that show fixer Mickey O'Brien and an officer positioned themselves at the top of the basement stairs where they beckoned for the circus men to walk by them, one by one.

Recalling his experience, Hall says, "As you got to the top, Mickey, pointing at each individual, would say 'sideshow.' And this other guy would say, 'OK, go out that way.' And if it was the prop department or certain other performers, the officer would say, 'OK, go out this way."

Hall and most workers, including the big top canvas crew, were released almost immediately, without being fingerprinted. Hall piled into a waiting taxi which hauled him and a half dozen cohorts back to the train. There, Hall laughs, he told the cab driver to charge the expense to the authorities.

Within an hour or so, the circus train made its departure for a Sunday layover in Joplin, Missouri, some 90 miles down the line near the Oklahoma border.

A group of Dailey property

Left behind were Carlisle and the rest of the prop crew, who faced rigorous interrogation by a team of detectives. "We had to lie down on the floor of the police station and not talk.... We talked in low voices just to amuse our-

selves," Carlisle wrote of the event.

Thanks to Carlisle's literacy, the night's activities could be recorded from a prop hand's point of view. Many circus hands, including prop boss Oscar Dennis, could neither read nor write, points out Ms. Philippus.

"Each man was taken in turn to an interview with a detective," wrote Carlisle. "Since I had never seen a detective, except in the movies, I was very impressed when my turn came about 2:00 a.m. I told the detective I had no

idea who would want to kill Butch. I told him Butch had no enemies that I knew about. I told him truthfully that if I knew who had killed Butch I would have told him, and I meant it. Being with it and for it was one thing, as far as robbery and hiding runaway kids went. But I would have ratted on a, murderer."

Carlisle continued with his expository article: "Apparently I impressed the detective, for I was released at 5:00 a.m. [Sunday], along with Harvey Rice and Toto [Navara], a Mexican who conveniently forgot all his English that night.

"A cop or somebody at the station told us that the show had a lawyer in Springfield, and somehow we all got into a taxi and went to Joplin in style ... for we only had a few dollars between us."

Actually, recalls Norma Cristiani, her dad arranged for cab fare for his workmen.

"I remember the taxi driver had his radio on, and it played 'Sentimental Journey," Carlisle wrote. "It had a wistful sound that reminded me of Butch."

Since he was among the first of the released prop crew to arrive at the Joplin circus lot, Carlisle said he was pressed by coworkers for details of the interrogation. "Frances, one of the bally broads, asked me about her boyfriend, Oscar Dennis, who was our prop boss. I hadn't seen him, for he was in jail. Frances was very worried about him." She later became Mrs. Oscar Dennis.

The remainder of the prop crew, including boss Dennis, rejoined the show before it left Joplin on Monday, October 25, and crossed into Oklahoma.

Aside from the coroner's hearing in Springfield on that same Monday, the death seemed to have caused little stir locally. Hank Billings, who was the police reporter for the *Springfield News Leader* at the time, recently told this writer that he had no memory of the incident. The still active columnist pointed out, however, that he may not have been on duty over the weekend when Petit's body was found.

Though left with no sure-fire suspect, Springfield investigators continued to treat the death as a possible homicide.

The 1950 Front Page Detective article provides what seems to be inside information on the case, although Hank Billings said he did not recognize the name of the article's author, Lemuel J. Masters, noting that the writer may have used a pen name.

According to the magazine, the coroner performing the autopsy stated, "Petit didn't die of a fractured skull.... A ruptured spleen and lung did the job. Wounds on the back of his head suggest that he may have been slugged,



but from all appearances the man was stomped to death! There are huge bruises on his chest and back, one even looks like a heel mark."

Among those questioned before the show left town was one of the circus truck drivers, known as "Mac" among his co-workers. Mac was older than most on the show and walked with a distinct limp, the result of a childhood deformity in his legs. The wagon driver denied any involvement in Petit's death and was released.

Poster used in 1948. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

Police decided to shadow the circus, hoping to keep pressure on anyone who might have information. Prop hand Carlisle recalled that when Dailey Bros. set up in McAlester, Oklahoma on October 29, just six days after it left Springfield, "we saw a

couple of plainclothes cops come across the lot and tap one prop man on the back. They led him off to a car....

"Then to my surprise I felt a tap on my back and was told to 'come along.' They took us all down to the city jail.... We stayed in there for a couple of hours before the fixer sprang us. They knew about the murder and decided to shake us down.... We went back to the lot and were not shaken down again for the rest of the season. However, the pulp magazine account said Texas authorities showed up at winter quarters in Gonzales, Texas, continuing to apply psychological pressure on a few circus employees.

According to *Front Page Detective* the all but abandoned case broke wide open on the evening of February 5, 1950, in San Antonio, Texas. That's when Mac, apparently being tailed by local detectives, "rushed upon them, crying out incoherently, 'Take me!' he yelled. 'Take me and be done with it. I did it. I did it! 'With that, he burst into agonizing sobs."

In his confession, reported the magazine, the wagon driver/mechanic allegedly told investigators that on the night of Petit's death on October 22, 1948 in Lamar, Missouri, "I guess I went a little crazy that night, because he [Petit] had been calling me 'Crip' all day. I went behind the big top, and there he laid asleep, right by the side of the truck—the one they found him in. I thought, 'Here's where I get even with that guy.' I got in the truck, backed it up and run it over him. I aimed for his head and I missed. Then I didn't have the nerve to do it again. But the wheels passed over his chest and that was plenty."

Returned to Lamar, Mac was charged with and plead-

ed guilty to second degree murder on February 20, 1950. According to the magazine, "Circuit Judge O. Brown, taking [Mac's] infirmity into consideration, tempered justice with mercy." He was sentenced to 10 years in the state penitentiary at Jefferson City, Missouri.

Did the wagon driver actually "murder" Butch Petit?

Years later, Carlisle in his "Sideshow World" story, was dubious. While acknowledging that Mac may have run over Petit, Carlisle put forth this theory about the fatal incident on the lot in Lairnar: "Butch was in the white coveralls we all wore.... He must have staggered off into the dark... somewhere and Mac ran over him.

"We used to sell 'Banners' to the local businesses in the towns we played. Old man [Reuben] Ray, the boss clown, painted them. They were long white strips of paper 8 to 10 feet long. At teardown they simply threw the things out into the back yard and left them on the lot. I often came upon them as I left the lot after teardown.

"Mac must have seen Butch in his white coveralls and have mistaken him for some of these banners. He probably was drinking himself. When he saw that he had hit someone, he and someone else just put him into wagon 41. It was teardown and the show had to move."

The *Front Page Detective* article reported that two other members of the prop crew, "who paired up for a wrestling act," helped prop boss Dennis load the unconscious Petit onto the prop wagon. Since the Springfield coroner later ruled that Petit was still alive when placed into the wagon in Lamar, Oscar Dennis was absolved of any blame in the death.

To buttress his theory, Carlisle pointed out that, during the 1949 season, "almost the same thing happened and to another friend of mine from Props." Carlisle recalled that while Dailey Bros. way playing in Winston Salem, North Carolina, Bill Brewer, 25, "got falling down drunk. It was teardown night, and as usual things were moving in high gear. We heard a yell out in the dark that someone had been run over. I ran out into the backyard and helped pull Bill out of a hole in the ground. The dog wagon (full of dogs) had run over him and mashed his body into the soft ground." After being rushed by ambulance to the hospital, the injured worker was released after what may have been only a cursory examination. "I was in the sleeper car when the ambulance drivers brought Bill back to his bunk," Carlisle recalled. "He was still clad in his white coveralls ... still moaning and incoherent. But he was gone the next morning. They had taken him during the night, for he was dying.'

As a postmortem, Carlisle commented, "There was another case of prejudice against circus people. I doubt if they could have saved [Bill]. But they could have at least given him some morphine to ease his agony. These two incidents taught me at an early age how many young men often needlessly throw away their lives, like Butch and Bill."

Ward Hall, who turned 19 on the Dailey Bros. sideshow in 1949, does not recall Brewer's death, but gives credence to Carlisle's account of the separate incidents involving Petit and Brewer.

"That's very logical to me," Hall reflects, six decades after Butch Petit's death. "I know of a number of people who were run over by a wagon" on the Dailey show.











Outdoor Amusement Business Association

Help the OABA and its supporters maintain the right of Circuses and USDA licensed performing animal owners to provide Americans with educational exhibits and performances of exotic animals.

To contribute to the Circus Fund......

Please make your check payable to:

OABA Circus Fund 1035 S. Semoran Blvd., #1045A Winter Park, FL 32792

All monetary contributions will be noted in SHOWTIME Magazine

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

WISHING YOU A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

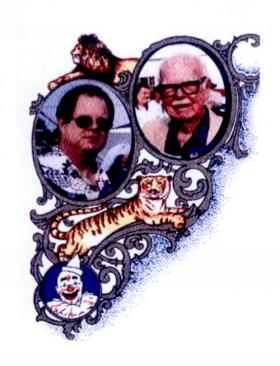


MAKE EVERY DAY A CIRKUS DAY!

BINDLESTIFF FAMILY CIRKUS

bindlestiff.org

thebindlestiffs.com



Holiday Greetings

Fred D. Pfening, Jr.
Editor and Publisher
and
Fred D. Pfening III
Managing Editor









Tim Holst, The Gang at Circus Smirkus

And the

Circus Smirkus-Tim Holst Tent #171

Circus Fans Association



Vol. 52. No. 6 NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2008 FRED D. PFENING, JR. EDITOR AND PUBLISHER Fred D. Pfening III, Managing Editor

Bandwagon, The Journal of the Circus Historical Society, Inc. (USPS 406-390) (ISSN 0005-4968), is published bi-monthly by the Circus Historical Society, Inc., 1075 West Fifth Ave., Columbus, OH 43212-2691. Periodicals Postage Paid at Columbus, OH. Postmaster: Send address changes to Bandwagon, 1075 West Fifth Ave., Columbus, OH 43212-2691.

Editorial, advertising and circulation office is located at 2515 Dorset Rd., Columbus, OH 43221. Phone (614) 294-5361. Advertising rates are: Full page \$100, half page \$60, quarter page \$35. Minimum ad \$25.

Bandwagon, new membership and subscription rate: \$40.00 per year in the United States; \$44.00 per year in Canada and outside United States. Single copies \$4.00 plus \$2 postage. Please direct all concerns regarding address changes and lack of delivery to the editor. Membership applications can be found on on the CHS web site http://circushistory.org.

CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. http://circushistory.org. Robert F. Sabia President, 3100 Parkside La., Williamsburg, VA 23185; Judith Griffin, Vice President, 519 N. Union St., Appleton, WI 54911-5031; Robert Cline, Secretary, 614 Brockland Lane, Cheraw, SC 29520-6084; Joe Parker, Treasurer, 6458 Ridgemont Drive, Dallas, TX 75314-2896.

Trustees: Alan Campbell, 600 Kings Peak Dr., Alpharetta, GA 30022-7844; Robert Cline, 814 Brockland Lane, Cheraw, SC 29528-6084; Judith Griffin, 519 N. Union St., Appleton, WI 54911-5031; Fred Dahlinger, Jr., 451 Roblee Rd., Baraboo, WI 53913; John McConnell, 1 Skyline Dr., Morristown, NJ 07960; Joe Parker, 6458 Ridgemont Drive, Dallas, TX 75314-2896; Fred D. Pfening, Jr., 2515 Dorset Rd., Columbus, OH 43221; Fred D. Pfening III, 1075 W. Fifth Ave., Columbus, OH 43212; John F. Polacsek, 5980 Lannoo, Detroit, MI 48236; Richard J. Reynolds III, 1186 Warrenhall Lane N.E., Atlanta, GA 30319; Robert F. Sabia, 3100 Parkside La., Williamsburg, VA 23185; Al Stencell, 15 Lark St., Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M4L-3M5. Trustee Emeritus: Stuart L.Thayer.

THE FRONT COVER

The gold colored Christmas card was issued by the John Robinson Circus in 1926.

That year the American Circus Corporation operated Sells-Floto Circus, Hagenbeck-Wallace and John Robinson, each on 30 cars.

NEW MEMBERS

John Nee 4528 The Beeches, Weir Rd. Taum, County Galway, Ireland

Jessica Kutza 4529 340 W. Phillips St. Coalville, PA 18218

Marian Matyn 4530 1469 Woodland Ave. Clare, MI 48617

Ford G. Daab 4531 14509 Sedona Dr. Gainesville, VA 20155 Ray Henderson 4532 6465 Monroe St. #200A Sylvania, OH 43560

Annette Gordon-Howell 4533 600 N. Mulberry St. Paola, KS 66071 O. Keith & Sheila Owen III 5303 Cherokee St. Houston, TX 77005

REINSTATED MEMBERS

4534

Peta Tait 4373 Latrobe University Drama Dept Victororia 3086, Australia

Greg Hisaw 3348 1502 S. Boulder, #15D Tulsa, OK 74119

THE 2009 CHS CONVENTION

Robert Sabia, Circus Historical Society president, has announced that the 2009 convention will be held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin July 9 to 12 The Comfort Inn-Lakeside will be the location.

The feature of the convention will be the Great Circus Parade on July 12.

Full details will be in the January-February 2009 Bandwagon.

SEASON REVIEW

The Circus Season in Review will appear in the March-April *Bandwagon*. Need information on Davenport's Big Top Circus.

Your help is needed to supply information and illustrations. Please send your contributions to the Editor.

ARTICLES INVITED

In the September-October Bandwagon readers were invited to submit articles for publication in the Bandwagon. Subject matter can be on the historic and current circus subjects.

CIRCUS MEMORIES

Has for sale

New and Out-of-print Books Memorabilia, Programs Original Photos, Routes

Send to: Paul Horsman 7926 State St. Rd. Port Byron, NY 13140

